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THE CHARM

AND OTHER DRAWING-ROOM PLAYS

BY

WALTER BESANT

AND WALTER POLLOCK

WITH 50 ILLUSTRATIONS

BY CHRIS HAMMOND AND A. JULE GOODMAN

LONDON

CHATTO & WINDUS

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PREFACE

In considering the Drawing-Room Comedy we ought to discuss first of all the exigencies of the stage on which such Comedy is likely to be played. For it may happen to be a small stage. Very few drawing-rooms, except those which belong to large houses, are able to provide a stage broad enough for many characters and for strong situations.

The stage must not be crowded with personages whose movements may be hampered by want of space. Again, such a stage may possibly have very little depth, which is another reason for keeping the situations as much as possible quiet and free from overmuch movement.

Next as regards the scenery. It must be considered that while a room, a hall, or a simple outside view may be easily represented, very little more can be attempted, and as a general rule there must be very little or no change of scenery.

We have thus arrived at certain definite limita-

tions. The actors must not be too many, thus impeding each other's movements; therefore the situations must be comparatively simple; while the scene must be one that is easily indicated. This simplicity does not necessarily prejudice the effect, as was shown in the case of Sir Henry Irving, then Mr. Irving, who gave *The Merchant of Venice* at Harvard College with nothing but the Shakespearian backing of curtains. The performance was a great success.

As regards the period, costume is always of the greatest importance in the case of the amateur as in that of the professional. In the eight plays presented here, three belong to a period before the present century. Of the remaining five, while two must belong to the present time, the other three may, with one or two slight alterations that can be left to the actors, be put into the eighteenth century.

As regards the plot of a drawing-room play, we venture to think that it should present a story quite clear and intelligible, a story that is capable of grasping and holding an audience, without calling for those deeper emotions which might be out of place in the drawing-room and might possibly prove to be beyond the power of the players. We have endeavoured, therefore, to make the dialogue simply

fit for the occasion, relying always on the interest of the story rather than on epigram and so-called 'smartness.'

We desire especially to dwell upon one point, at first sight small, but really of great importance. It is, that all these plays have been written without reference to this or that particular actor or actress. It is, therefore, not only open to the stage manager, but it will also be easy for him, to alter the dialogue so as to suit members of the company, to write up certain scenes where these members are strong, and to compress others where they may be weak. Thus an actor or actress may thoroughly comprehend the gist of a speech, but may find its phraseology for some reason or other unsuited to his or her method. In this case the stage manager may, without difficulty, alter the words. In the same way a song, a dance, or any additional 'business' that suggests itself may be introduced, so long as it is not out of keeping with the conduct of the fable.

In four of these pieces there is introduced a song, or a little snatch of song. In one, at least, of the others, a song might be introduced with advantage.

The authors of these pieces will be very much gratified if the plays are found on trial to suit the purpose for which they were designed.

One of them—*The Spy*—may seem to cross the rule we have laid down, that the plot should not

be 'violent.' It is here inserted in the hope that the exception may prove the rule.

Six out of the eight plays here presented have been published in 'Pearson's Magazine.' The other two have appeared in an American magazine. In some cases the plays were compressed for their serial appearance. They have now been restored to their first form. All the illustrations appeared in 'Pearson.'

As regards the plots of these plays, two are derived from short stories already published by one of the authors. The rest are original.

W. B.
W P.

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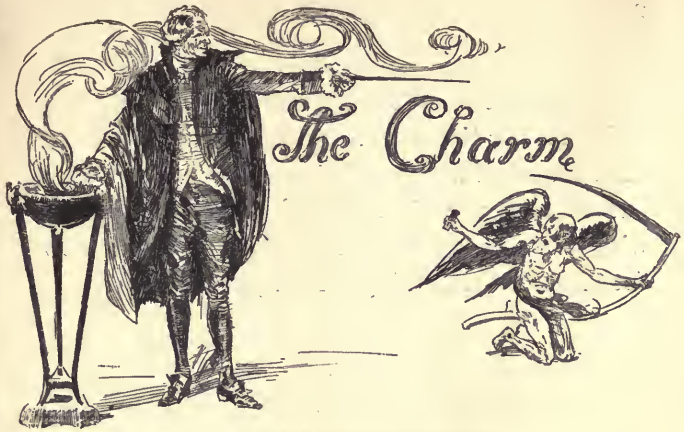


DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

GASTON, Marquis de Montserrat.
BERNARD, Chevalier de Saint-Aignan.
RAOUL, Vidame de Chatillon-Cursay.
THE BARON ALDEBARAN.
COLIN, Valet.
ISABELLE, Princesse de Chalons.
HÉLÈNE, Duchesse de Périgord.
JEANNETTE, Lady's-maid to the Duchesse.

PLACE—Paris. TIME—Eighteenth Century.

ACT I

SCENE—*The salon of the* DUCHESSE DE PÉRIGORD.

Decoration, Louis Quinze style. Portraits on walls. A card-table at back. A harpsichord, chairs, and sofa.

COLIN, *in livery, and* JEANNETTE, *with a duster, discovered.*

COLIN (*sighs*)

How are we this evening, Jeannette?

JEAN. (*sighs*)

Pretty well. We rang our bell at ten. We called for our tisane at a quarter past. We had a little soup and a glass of wine at twelve. We went out to take the air at three. We dined off the wing of a chicken and an omelette. We are now dressing for the evening. And you, Colin ?

COLIN

We rose at noon, after a cup of chocolate. We were completely dressed by two. We were then wheeled to the Gardens of the Luxembourg. We came home, and read a chapter from a Regency novel. What a time, Jeannette, was the Regency for a young fellow with a leg ! We made a tolerable dinner, and we are now on our way, in a chair, to the salon of our beloved Duchesse. Here I await the chair's arrival, because old age sometimes suffers from such a forced march and has to be readjusted.

JEAN.

What lifelong devotion, Colin ! What a lesson of constancy to young men—like yourself !

COLIN

What severity, Jeannette ! What a warning to young women—like yourself !

JEAN.

Yet every woman would like sixty years' devotion.

COLIN

Sixty-five, you may say. Yet what man, at the outset, would dare to go on if he knew that there were sixty-five years of patience before him?

JEAN.

You young men are so impatient.

COLIN

Fortunately, young women nowadays are not so cruel.

JEAN.

Sixty-five years of courtship!

COLIN

Hush, Jeannette! Bad luck to count. Perhaps time has forgotten us.

JEAN. (*sighs*)

Scarcely—for we age daily.

[*With slight indication of aged walk.*

COLIN (*sighs*)

Indeed, we do walk more feebly.

[*They go through pantomime of aged people meeting, bowing, taking snuff, &c.*

JEAN.

And, alas! we smile seldom; except, indeed, with an effort, in the salon——

COLIN

Yes, in the salon—there only can we forget the ravages of time. Ah, Jeannette!

JEAN.

Ah, Colin!

COLIN

You are distractingly pretty this morning. Do you know—— [*Edges closer.*

JEAN.

Fie, Colin!

COLIN

Youth, Jeannette—youth, I say (*puts his arm round her waist*) youth is the time for——

JEAN.

For beginning the devotion of a lifetime, which may, perhaps, be rewarded——

COLIN

After sixty-five years? No, Jeannette, it is thus and thus——

[*Tries to kiss her. She pushes him from her. Door opens.*

Enter RAOUL. COLIN *runs away.*

JEAN. (*hurriedly*)

Yes, M. Raoul, Madame will be here immediately. I will tell her that you are here.

RAOUL

Do not hurry her, child. So (*chucks her under the chin*) Colin was imitating the manners of his masters, was he?

JEAN.

To be sure, M. Raoul; we cannot always be with our betters without learning something.

RAOUL

And what have you learned, Jeannette?

JEAN.

To reward my lovers, M. Raoul (*edging away*), after sixty-five years of service. [*Exit* JEAN.

RAOUL

Ah! well! I suppose love was different in the days of the Regent. Sixty-five years' service! The charming ladies on the walls do not look as if they would demand all that time; perhaps some were content with forty years, some with twenty, and some with even a week. (*Goes round, looking at the portraits.*) Here is a portrait of the Duchesse herself. A beautiful woman in those days—not quite

in modern taste. But this is the woman who made a slave of my grandfather. The young fellows of that time certainly had their consolations. (*Still goes round.*) Here is the Princesse in her young days. One might look farther and fare worse. And here are the young bloods—the Regent himself. Why, this was the very room where he had many a supper with La Parabère and the rest. And to think that in this very salon the old, old people meet every night to talk over the past and forget the present! Poor old folk! They say age comes to all. Perhaps. Meantime, one is young.

Enter the DUCHESSE, *on* JEANNETTE'S *arm*

(*Hastening to offer his own*) Madame, permit me.

DUCHESSE

Thanks, Raoul—my son, Raoul, since we have agreed that I may call you by that sweet name.

RAOUL

Madame, your kindness overpowers me.

DUCHESSE

My own son is—long since—Jeannette, my snuffbox (*takes snuff*)—long since—Ha!—yes—dead. I was vexed, I remember, at the time. You are singularly like your grandfather, Raoul.

RAOUL

You knew him when he was young; but of course that was long before your time.

DUCHESSE

No, boy; that was in my time. Women have but one time. When that is over they have no other; and when one is eighty, one can, alack! no longer be beautiful.

RAOUL

Madame can never cease to be both beautiful and charming.

DUCHESSE

Your manners, Raoul, resemble your grandfather's. You have something of his finished style.

RAOUL

I am honoured, Madame, with this approbation.

DUCHESSE

Enjoy your youth, my son. Lay to heart the admonition of an old woman.

RAOUL

Ah! never, never old—to her friends.

DUCHESSE

Yes (*resolutely*), eighty-two. Do you hear?—

eighty-two years old. Jeannette, my snuff-box. (*Takes snuff.*) I was saying—— Yes, Raoul, enjoy your youth.

RAOUL

I do. What else is there to enjoy?

DUCHESSE

Do not waste it. Make love to the most beautiful women only; frequent none but the best society; avoid gambling, duels, orgies, coarse pleasures. Remember that a beautiful old age—a time of serene satisfaction—can only be obtained by the most careful conduct of youth. Ah! what pleasures we have lost! What possibilities do the young idly throw away! Be wise in time, dear Raoul.

RAOUL

I will, dear Madame. Meantime, I am in love with half the ladies of fashion, and only just out of love with the other half. I have as yet fought only six duels, and I gamble no more than a gentleman should.

DUCHESSE

And do not drink too much wine, dear child. Why, but for his champagne at supper the Regent, the best and most generous of men, might have been living until now.

RAOUL

When he would be about a hundred and ten. We might have grown a little tired of Philippe. What a delightful invention is champagne!

DUCHESSE

Your grandfather, Raoul, of sainted—I mean, of course, not sainted—saintliness is only expected of common persons—but of delightful memory, was, like the Regent, inordinately addicted to late suppers and champagne.

RAOUL

And to making love, Madame, I have heard, to the most beautiful woman of his time.

DUCHESSE

(*In confusion*). It was true, my child. She used him barbarously. She can never forgive herself.

RAOUL

She accepts, at least (*kneels on one knee*), the devotion of the grandson for the love of the grandfather.

DUCHESSE

Rise, Raoul. Yes, I accept the service of the

boy—for the—ardour (*sighs*) of the grandsire. Alas! at that happy time he was your age, Raoul, and had your face. What a time! What men! What manners!

COLIN

M. le Marquis de Montserrat!

Enter MARQUIS. *He is an old man, who walks with a cane and leans upon the arm of* COLIN. *Ceremonious salutations.* MARQUIS *kisses* DUCHESSE'S *hands.* RAOUL *bows.*

MARQUIS

Young man, you are fortunate. Had the Duchesse been as kind to me some time ago as she now is to you—I—but (*takes snuff*)—let us be philosophers.

COLIN

M. le Chevalier de Saint-Aignan!

Enter the CHEVALIER. *He also is a very old man.*

CHEVALIER

Duchesse, your servant. (*Bends with difficulty to kiss her hands.*) You are—I need not ask—always well and—and—and youthful.

DUCHESSE

No, Chevalier (*takes snuff*), not youthful.

ENTER MARQUIS

COLIN

Madame la Princesse de Chalons.

[PRINCESSE (*an old lady made-up young, and sprightly*) *kisses* DUCHESSE, *gives hand to gentlemen, sits down exhausted, and coughs.*

DUCHESSE

And now, Raoul, for your budget of news.

[*They all sit round, while* RAOUL *stands in the middle and talks.*

RAOUL

I have but little. The Duc d'Argenson is to marry the daughter of the Marquis de Carabas.

PRINCESSE

We know that. Your news, M. Raoul, is a week old.

RAOUL

The people are starving in Auvergne.

MARQUIS

(*Takes snuff*). The ill-conditioned people of Auvergne are always starving.

RAOUL

The rustics in Picardy are in revolt.

CHEVALIER

Shoot them down! (*Takes snuff.*) That is how, in my time, we treated revolt. Shoot and hang. It is the only remedy for the common people.

RAOUL

The Court goes next week to Versailles.

PRINCESSE

Ah! the Court interests us so little now. We who can remember think of the old Court—the glories of the Regency.

MARQUIS

There, at least, was no Madame Dubarry.

PRINCESSE

And you have no scandal to tell us?

RAOUL

None this evening. An Ambassador is expected from China. The King's cooks are collecting birds' nests, in order that he may be entertained with the national dish.

MARQUIS

China is a long way off.

DUCHESSE

Yes; I prefer to hear of Paris.

RAOUL

It is reported that our fleet has been destroyed by the English off the port of Brest.

CHEVALIER

In my time we destroyed the English fleets. Ventre St. Gris! Where are our captains?

MARQUIS

They were used up in the process.

DUCHESSE

And nothing of Paris?

RAOUL

Nothing. Stay! There is the Baron Aldebaran.

PRINCESSE

Who is the Baron Al-de-ba-ran? Is it an Italian name?

CHEVALIER

You are talking of the quack who promises——

MARQUIS

You mean the charlatan who pretends——

DUCHESSE

What does he promise, Raoul?

RAOUL

He is a man of middle age, who pretends to be five hundred years old. He told me a great many

anecdotes; for instance, about my great-great-grandfather, who was Marshal of France and a friend of Henri Quatre. He also says he knows how to cure all diseases, prolong life, and—the usual things.

DUCHESSE

This becomes interesting. Pray go on, Raoul.

RAOUL

Of course I do not believe a word he says. Still, I have seen him cure a cripple, who carried away his crutches; and he makes people fall asleep by merely waving his hand—that I have myself witnessed.

MARQUIS

These impostors appear in every generation. One of them, called the Count Von Nürnberg, was about the Court fifty years ago.

RAOUL

The Baron Aldebaran says it was himself.

CHEVALIER

Another was at Malta sixty years ago. The Grand Master clapped him into prison, and we were going to burn him. Unluckily, he escaped.

RAOUL

Aldebaran told us the story. He says he remembers your putting him in prison.

DUCHESSE

The Baron has bewitched you, dear son. We are, however, too old for these fancies.

MARQUIS

The Duchesse can never be too old.

DUCHESSE

Oh, Marquis!——

PRINCESSE

And that is all you have to tell us, M. Raoul?

RAOUL

That is my budget, Madame la Princesse.

DUCHESSE

Then, dear son, we will keep you no longer from your own world. Youth is the time for enjoyment.

PRINCESSE

Alas! yes. There is no other time for happiness.

DUCHESSE

Go, then, Raoul! Make love, laugh, sing. Leave us to our cards—and our memories. [*Exit* RAOUL.

PRINCESSE (*absently*)

Restore our youth? If that were possible!

[*Meantime* COLIN *arranges card-tables and cards; places chairs.*

CHEVALIER

And such a youth as yours, dear Princesse! Yet with you beauty is immortal.

COLIN

The cards are ready, Madame.

DUCHESSE

Come, then.

[*They rise. Gentlemen lead ladies. Sit down.* MARQUIS *deals. They play.*

PRINCESSE

Ah! I have made a mistake. Chevalier, pardon me.

DUCHESSE

I have revoked. Partner, I am playing shockingly.

PRINCESSE (*holding her cards so that everybody can see them*)

Restore our youth! Strange if it could, after all, be done.

DUCHESSE (*letting her cards fall upon the table*)

Bring back our beauty! My dear, if that were possible!

CHEVALIER

We waste precious time in idle dreams. Princesse, you show your hand.

'BRING BACK OUR BEAUTY!'

MARQUIS

Duchesse, you have dropped your cards.

DUCHESSE (*rising*)

I cannot play to-night. I am agitated.

MARQUIS

Dear Duchesse, may I bring you a glass of wine? [DUCHESSE *shakes her head.*

PRINCESSE

We can play no more. Let us sit and talk of old days—the days when we were young—all young together.

DUCHESSE

When we loved and were loved.

CHEVALIER

When we made love, and danced, and fought.

MARQUIS

The days of suppers and gallantry, when—when —Duchesse—you remember that evening?

[CHEVALIER *and* MARQUIS *both rise.*

DUCHESSE

'Twas in this very room.

[DUCHESSE *and* MARQUIS *walk up stage.*

CHEVALIER

Isabelle, you remember that morning——

PRINCESSE

When I drove you home after supper here. The sun had just risen when you made that

impudent declaration. Oh, Bernard! you looked so handsome.

CHEVALIER

And you, Isabelle, so bewitching.

PRINCESSE

Can a woman—a young woman—look aught but bewitching when the man she loves is at her feet?

[*The* CHEVALIER *and* PRINCESSE *retire up stage* DUCHESSE *and* MARQUIS *coming down.*

DUCHESSE

Our youth? Oh, dear Marquis! the young men are not what they were. Where could we find so brave and handsome a man as you were then?

MARQUIS

Where could we find so lovely, so brilliant a creature as you were then, Hélène?

DUCHESSE

You called me—Hélène—on that night—before the supper. Gaston, you made me the happiest of women.

MARQUIS

And you, Hélène the beautiful, made me the happiest of men.

[*The* PRINCESSE *sits before the spinet and plays.*

DUCHESSE

We danced—in those days, Gaston—no one so well as you.

MARQUIS

Could any nymph move more divinely than you?

[PRINCESSE *plays a gavotte. The* MARQUIS *and* DUCHESSE *dance part of a minuet, then sit down exhausted.*

MARQUIS

Come! come! let us be philosophers. (*Takes snuff and shrugs shoulders.*) What has been, has been—it cannot come again. We live in the present. Let us enjoy the moment.

CHEVALIER

We cannot make love—we cannot fight—we cannot ride—we cannot dance—we cannot even drink! What is there to enjoy?

[PRINCESSE *plays, and sings in a weak, tremulous voice.*

PRINCESSE

When autumn leaves about the lawns
And round the trees are drifting high;
When frosty nights bring misty dawns,
Back to past days, back to past days, our memories fly.

When summer loads the breath of June,
And warm airs lull the lovesick brain,
And maidens dream through drowsy noon,
The joys of youth, of vanished youth, come back again.

When April suns light up the hills,
And young men woo and maidens wait,
When children wreathe young daffodils,
Our hopes of spring, of bygone spring, we tell too late.

When to and fro the lovers go,
When damsels hear with blushing cheek,
When tabors play at close of day,
Ah! then of love, of perished love, we sadly speak.

[*While* PRINCESSE *finishes singing* ALDEBARAN *enters, unseen by any of them. He stands in the middle of the room; his dress is black.*

ALDEBARAN

Thank you, Princesse.

[PRINCESSE *shrieks; they all turn round.*

MARQUIS

Who is this? What guest have we the honour of receiving?

ALDEBARAN

I am called Aldebaran.

PRINCESSE

You are the man who (*gasps*)—restores health to the sick—and—and——

ALDEBARAN

I am a man who knows the secrets of science.

CHEVALIER

Bah! Your science—what does it do? You sit in your laboratory and make discoveries; meantime we get old, and in time——

MARQUIS

Let us be philosophers. (*Takes snuff.*) We exist—we cease to exist; that is all.

DUCHESSE

Ah! Yet, if science could——

ALDEBARAN

Madame, there are no limits to the power of science, believe me—none. Think as much as you please, you can think of nothing that science cannot do.

MARQUIS

These are the usual boasts of the charlatan. Perhaps, M. Aldebaran, you will be so good as to let the Duchesse know what is your business—if you have any?

ALDEBARAN

I come here uninvited. I have nothing to gain —nothing to sell. M. le Marquis, you are, in mind, at least, unchanged since the year 1720, when I last had the pleasure of meeting you. The same incredulity, the same——

MARQUIS

You may add, the same unbelief in persons who call themselves five hundred years old.

DUCHESSE

But, Marquis, if this gentleman can do what he promises——

PRINCESSE

If he can, by his science, perform these miracles——

ALDEBARAN

Ladies, you do not remember me. Yet, when I saw you last you were young, you were gay, you were worshipped. It was in the year 1720. In that same year that I had a certain altercation with the Marquis, then a fiery young man of five-and-twenty.

[*The* MARQUIS *looks closely at him.*

MARQUIS

I seem to recollect you. You are surely the same man who then called himself the Count de Nürnberg.

ALDEBARAN

I did. I was then the Count de Nürnberg, as I am now the Baron Aldebaran.

MARQUIS

And you were then, as you seem to be now, a man of forty or fifty. Yet it is sixty years ago. Strange! Well, it matters nothing. Let us be philosophers. [*Takes snuff and shrugs shoulders.*

ALDEBARAN

Let me, Madame la Duchesse, recall one incident of that year. It is known only, I believe, to yourself and to one other person, who has—well—who has ceased to speak. I will, with your permission, whisper it in your ear. [*Whispers.*

DUCHESSE (*shrieks*)

Is this man a wizard ?

ALDEBARAN

There was also, Madame la Princesse, an event which took place in that same year connected with your own history——

'LET ME, MADAME LA DUCHESSE, RECALL ONE INCIDENT OF THAT YEAR.'

PRINCESSE

If it is known only to myself and—and a man who is no more, I would rather not hear it.

ALDEBARAN

Perhaps he is still living. Listen. [*Whispers.*

PRINCESSE

Ah! he *is* a wizard! My dear Chevalier! (*holds out both hands to him*). Then it was you, after all. I knew it. Oh! could I show my gratitude! But it is too late—too late!

[ALDEBARAN *has whispered* CHEVALIER, *who stares in wonder.*

CHEVALIER

Yes, Princesse, it was I who did you that small service. I have been long repaid by your kindness —your friendship——

PRINCESSE

Say, Chevalier, my love, though it is now too late.

ALDEBARAN

You see, then, that nothing is impossible. If I, who sixty years ago was forty years of age, now am still forty, and no more, why should not things still stranger happen?

DUCHESSE

Baron, do not raise false hopes.

PRINCESSE

But if he can——

DUCHESSE

Ah! if he can.

MARQUIS

Can he?

CHEVALIER

A man, Marquis, who at five hundred looks forty is worth listening to.

MARQUIS

The Count—the Baron—will pardon me for observing that that has yet to be proved.

[*Shrugs shoulders and takes snuff.*

ALDEBARAN

Ladies, I divine your thoughts, I know your wishes. You would be once more young, and—permit me the word—once more you would be beautiful, and once more see the train of lovers following at your steps.

PRINCESSE

Duchesse—Hélène—friend of my youth!

DUCHESSE

Isabelle!

ALDEBARAN

I can make you young. In five minutes, by

the waving of my hand, I can make the years run backwards—I can restore to you your twenty summers.

PRINCESSE AND DUCHESSE (*catching each other by the hand*)

Oh!

ALDEBARAN

The bloom shall return to your cheeks, the lustre to your eyes, the grace to your shape, the smile to your lips, the young strength and spring to your limbs—you shall be again in the splendour of your beauty.

DUCHESSE AND PRINCESSE

Oh! Oh! Oh!

ALDEBARAN

You shall again have gallant gentlemen—young, handsome, noble—kneeling before you.

CHEVALIER

Princesse, if this is true, what am I to do?

MARQUIS

Duchesse, after sixty-five years of devotion, am I to see you the prize of another man?

PRINCESSE

Ah, Bernard! could I be so ungrateful?

DUCHESSE

Gaston, can I ever forget the past?

ALDEBARAN

Be content, gentlemen. These ladies will have the honour themselves of communicating to you the same wonder. They can make you young again, if they please. That is their gift—not mine.

CHEVALIER

How—how can they do that?

MARQUIS

Calm yourself, my friend. Let us be philosophers. (*Takes snuff.*) Nothing can make us young again.

ALDEBARAN

Yes, these ladies, whom you have loved so long, to whom you have devoted the suit and service of a life, they can now repay your affection.

ALL

How?

ALDEBARAN

By returning your passion. Yes, by bestowing

their affections upon you, by returning your love, they will restore your youth.

[*The ladies look at each other in delight.*

DUCHESSE

Gaston, I love you already! Yes, in the presence of my dear Isabelle, before the Chevalier, before this illustrious, this distinguished, this generous stranger, I declare that I love you dearly.

MARQUIS

Hélène, you are, as usual, most amiable. Your kindness gratifies and flatters me. Yet—so far—I feel no younger. [*Takes snuff.*

PRINCESSE

Bernard, before Hélène and the Marquis I swear that there is no other man in the world whom I love. Yes, by the memory of all your years of patience, by the thought that you have cheered my loneliness, made age tolerable, and beguiled my sorrows, I swear that I love you truly, deeply, with all my heart.

CHEVALIER (*kisses her hands*)

Isabelle, best and kindest of hearts. But I feel—alas!—no younger—as yet no younger.

ALDEBARAN

Patience! These generous ladies were too quick. They spoke before the time in the noble eagerness of their gratitude and love. They must

'LET US BE PHILOSOPHERS.'

first be young themselves. Then—then, such words as these will change your eighty-five years, unbelieving Marquis, to twenty-five.

MARQUIS

Let us be philosophers. [*Takes snuff.*

[PRINCESSE *sits in old place at harpsichord. Stool shifted a little, so that she is able to see* ALDEBARAN. *He looks from one to the other. They look at each other uneasily. Then they all four look at him. Signs of mesmeric influences. When they are all under influence curtain drops.*

ALDEBARAN

DUCHESSE (*seated*) PRINCESSE (*at the piano*)
MARQUIS CHEVALIER

ACT II

(*Five minutes later*)

SCENE—*All as before.*

ALDEBARAN *retreating as he completes the passes. He disappears behind portière, and all recover life. The ladies are young again. They look about them. They rise. They rush into each other's arms.*

DUCHESSE

Isabelle!

PRINCESSE

Hélène!

DUCHESSE

I so hoped you would come. It seems an age since we met.

PRINCESSE

Does it not! But it makes the meeting all the pleasanter. What a pretty dress! And how well you look!

DUCHESSE

Thank you, dear!

PRINCESSE

Do tell me who is coming! Will your special adorer be here?

DUCHESSE

I do not know. He left me in a huff. But no doubt he will come to his senses again. A certain Vicomte is to come, and will, of course, devote himself to you all the evening.

PRINCESSE

If I allow him to, which I very much doubt. He is too impetuous.

[MARQUIS *and* CHEVALIER *are gazing in wonder and admiration.*

CHEVALIER (*impetuously*)

It is our turn! Quick! Quick! I want to feel once more the bounding pulse of youth.

MARQUIS (*more slowly*)

He said—come, let us be philosophers—(*takes snuff*)—he said that a word from them—— They are young again—they are as I remember them——.

CHEVALIER (*falling on his knees*)

Isabelle! divine Isabelle! you are indeed once more what you were sixty years ago. Incomparable woman! repeat the promise of your love.

MARQUIS (*falling slowly on his knees*)

Hélène! lovely Hélène! Hélène of Troy! Queen of beauty! my memory recalls those charms, yet ten times as fair as when—— Oh! Hélène, tell me once again that you love me!

[*The girls look in amazement. Then they look at each other. Then they laugh, but gently, their faces behind their fans.*

DUCHESSE

Love you, dear sir? Here is some strange delusion. Love you? Have you mistaken the house? Tell me once again. Isabelle, my dear, do you know this old gentleman, who asks me, leaning on his crutch, to love him? Sir, why should I love you?

MARQUIS (*rising aside*)

To be sure, why? I had not thought of that.

CHEVALIER (*rising*)

You, at least, Isabelle, are true to an old adorer. You love me still?

PRINCESSE

Love you, sir? Repeat the promise of my love? Are you dreaming? Hélène, did you ever hear so absurd a request? I am sure so venerable, so respectable a gentleman as yourself would not, in his right senses, put such a question to a lady the

very first time he saw her. Sir, what answer can you expect?

[DUCHESSE *and* PRINCESSE *go up stage, laughing. The gentlemen look at each other.*

CHEVALIER

They have thrown us over! Ventre St. Gris! Could we believe it possible? Oh, woman!

THE MARQUIS AND CHEVALIER KNEEL

woman! after sixty-five years of courtship! She recovers her youth, and laughs at me because I am old. Why, five minutes ago—— Marquis, are we mad? Are we dreaming?

MARQUIS

At my time of life I am not surprised at anything. (*Takes snuff.*) Kneeling tries a man with

sciatica. Yet this is a disappointment which—— Come, Chevalier, be a philosopher. (*Offers snuff-box.*) After all, women are uncertain.

CHEVALIER

I will not endure it. [*Walks about*

MARQUIS

Then, my dear friend, let me ask what you propose to do?

CHEVALIER

I will—I will! Yet, what can I do?

MARQUIS

Nothing. You see, Chevalier, we have forgotten, most unfortunately, an important, an essential fact.

CHEVALIER

That is—— Oh! who could believe it? What fact?

MARQUIS

How should they remember us? The young have no more memory than kittens.

CHEVALIER

I will remind her of my long devotion. I will tell her what I have done. I will move her heart by the tale of a lifelong love.

MARQUIS

Consult the glass, Chevalier. Look at the wrinkles in your face, the stoop in your shoulders, the stoop in your knees. Where is the elastic spring of youth? Are you, as you were, young and handsome? Come (*snuff-box*), let us be philosophers. [*The ladies come down.*

CHEVALIER (*to* PRINCESSE)

Pardon, Madame.

PRINCESSE

Mademoiselle, if you please, Monsieur.

CHEVALIER (*disconcerted*)

I beg pardon, Madame—I mean Mademoiselle. Will you permit me to relate to you a story—a little story?

PRINCESSE

A fairy-story?

DUCHESSE

A ghost story?

CHEVALIER

A story (*tragically*). It is of two most faithful and most unfortunate lovers.

PRINCESSE

Pray proceed—if it is a short story.

CHEVALIER

No; it is a long one. It is sixty-five years long.

DUCHESSE

Sixty-five years long? Then, let us wait till we have had our ball.

MARQUIS

It will take less time to tell, I think. But, ladies, you do not know my friend. Permit me to introduce to you M. Bernard de Saint-Aignan, Chevalier of Malta.

DUCHESSE

I have heard my grandmother speak of you, sir. I am honoured in making your acquaintance.

CHEVALIER

Permit me, ladies, in my turn, to present my friend the Marquis de Montserrat.

PRINCESSE

M. le Marquis was, I believe, a friend of my grandmother's. Sir, I desire your friendship.

MARQUIS

Now, Chevalier, your story.

CHEVALIER

Sixty-five years ago two young gentlemen fell in love with two ladies also young.

PRINCESSE

This is a most original beginning. Young men fall in love with young ladies! Pray, sir, what better could they do?

CHEVALIER

Their love was returned: they became their accepted suitors. Their courtship was continued —for sixty-five years. [*Ladies laugh.*

DUCHESSE

Absurd! if that is all your story, M. le Chevalier.

CHEVALIER (*disconcerted*)

Well!—that is all the story.

MARQUIS

Pardon me, not quite all. The ladies were as much attached to their adorers as they were to their mistresses. Long companionship endeared them to one another.

DUCHESSE

Pardon me, M. le Marquis, but our guests will be arriving.

MARQUIS

One moment more. By some sorcery the ladies at eighty recovered their youth—they became twenty—they scorned the love of their old suitors. Yes, Madame (*fiercely*).

CHEVALIER

It is too true, Madame (*to the* PRINCESSE, *fiercely*).

PRINCESSE AND DUCHESSE

Oh! what terrible old men!

MARQUIS

They scorned their love.

CHEVALIER

They laughed at their age.

MARQUIS

They mocked their vows.

CHEVALIER

They pretended to forget the long years of service. As if they could forget!

PRINCESSE

I do not understand this story at all. Two old ladies to become young again! Two old lovers of sixty-five years' standing! Why——

DUCHESSE

Isabelle—— We must not wait, gentlemen. These aged lovers should be treated with tisane. You must allow us to leave you.

PRINCESSE

We shall ask for the end of this charming story, most interesting as it is (*yawns*), when we shall have the pleasure of seeing you.

[*Exit* PRINCESSE *and* DUCHESSE.

CHEVALIER

Good Heavens, Marquis! Were two men ever so abused? If it were not for my gout I would——

MARQUIS

And I, were it not for my sciatica, I would—— Come, Chevalier, let us be philosophers. (*Snuffs.*) What could we expect?

CHEVALIER

We have spent our youth. We had no right, though the gift was dangled in our faces, to expect it back again. But this mockery, this barefaced contempt! By Heavens! it is too much. I will wait. I will watch. If the Princesse gives the least encouragement to any other man I will—I will——

MARQUIS

With what hand, my friend, and with what weapon? The time is gone. The fellow Aldebaran has got some secret. Let us bribe him. Bah! the thing is absurd. Come, Chevalier, let us have a game of piquet.

[COLIN *lays the table; they sit down to play.*

'WERE TWO MEN EVER SO ABUSED?'

CHEVALIER (*angrily, throwing down cards and rising*)

Did ever man hear the like?

MARQUIS

My friend, patience! The young have no memory. What are our eighty-five years to them? The young have no memory.

CHEVALIER

To see her in the arms of another——

MARQUIS

How should the young love the old? Once more, my friend, let me remind you that at eighty-five a few of the charms of youth have left us.

CHEVALIER

I have lost my Isabelle! The image of that divine woman is shattered.

MARQUIS (*sadly*)

Alas! it has taken me sixty-five years to learn the heart of my Hélène. Now she is torn from me.

CHEVALIER

Let us leave this cursed salon. Let us retreat to our own rooms, where we will rail at women.

MARQUIS

No; rather let us find out this devil of an Aldebaran, and bribe him—if we can—with all our fortune, if need be——

CHEVALIER (*eagerly*)

To give us back our youth.

MARQUIS

No, Chevalier; that is impossible. To give them back their age.

CHEVALIER

And to take away their youth.

MARQUIS

Why, after all, age is the best time.

[CHEVALIER *shakes his head.*

MARQUIS

Can youth talk of the past?

CHEVALIER

Youth can enjoy the present.

MARQUIS

What is the present to the past? What could youth give us to compare with such talk as we have had—we four—within these walls?

CHEVALIER

Yes, this room is full of ghosts—the ghosts of our perished years.

MARQUIS

There is no present for us. As for the future —— (*shrugs his shoulders often and takes snuff; looks round, and shakes his head*). There is certainly the past——

Enter RAOUL.

CHEVALIER (*roughly*)

Sir, we are obliged to you—we are indeed very much obliged to you.

RAOUL (*bows*)

May I ask, M. le Chevalier, in what way?

MARQUIS

It is to you, M. le Vidame, that we owe the appearance of the Baron Aldebaran. We are so much obliged to you that——

CHEVALIER

That, upon my word, if I were sixty instead of eighty I would call you out.

RAOUL

Then, sir, I am heartily glad that you are not sixty.

MARQUIS

Your friend, sir, the Baron Aldebaran, has been

here, and has accomplished his work—his infernal work.

CHEVALIER

He will cool his heels before many days, if I have any influence, in the Bastille.

RAOUL

But what has the Baron done?

MARQUIS

To you it will doubtless seem a trifle. He has restored the ladies to youth, that is all—that is all! Our old friends have left us. They are young, but we remain old.

RAOUL

Youth!—the Duchesse and the Princesse? You call that a trifle? What is the meaning of this?

MARQUIS

A very small thing—to them—because it only means the beginning over again. But to us—why, sir, we have lost the salon where we have sat every day for fifty years!

CHEVALIER

And the women to whom we have made love for sixty-five years.

MARQUIS

The most delightful of women.

CHEVALIER

The friends of our young days.

MARQUIS

The last of our friends.

CHEVALIER

Who could remember everything.

MARQUIS

They knew all the stories.

CHEVALIER

The best-bred ladies in the world.

MARQUIS

And the best possible partners at quadrille.

CHEVALIER

And—and—in fact, the habits of a lifetime are rudely broken up and destroyed.

RAOUL

I am amazed! Young again?

MARQUIS

You shall see. Here they come!

Enter DUCHESSE *and* PRINCESSE, *bearing dominoes, masks, and hoods in their hands.*

MARQUIS

Permit me, ladies, to present to you my young friend Raoul, Vidame de Chatillon.

DUCHESSE

I have heard my grandmother speak of your ancestors, sir.

PRINCESSE

And mine. A friend of——

CHEVALIER

Their grandmothers! They are ashamed of their names now.

MARQUIS

They have forgotten. How can girls of twenty be grandmothers?

RAOUL

(*Aside to the* MARQUIS) I do not understand what you mean about youth. These young ladies have been often mentioned to me by the Duchesse (*Aloud*) And the Duchesse, Mademoiselle?

DUCHESSE

My dear grandmother is as well as her infirmities and great age will allow.

CHEVALIER (*to* MARQUIS)

You hear! She will brazen out anything.

RAOUL (*to the* PRINCESSE)

I last had the pleasure of seeing the Princesse here, Mademoiselle.

PRINCESSE

I left her at home over the fire. Dear grandmamma, she feels the weight of years.

MARQUIS (*to* CHEVALIER)

You hear! They are both in a tale.

DUCHESSE

M. le Vidame, I hope that we shall be able to persuade you to stay this evening. Our friends will arrive immediately. [RAOUL *bows.*

PRINCESSE

If that could be considered an inducement, M. le Vidame, I would (*shyly*) offer you my hand for the first dance.

RAOUL

Oh, Mademoiselle! I am too much honoured.

DUCHESSE

(*Aside*) She actually throws herself at his head! (*Aloud*) M. le Vidame, one must not neglect the friends of one's grandmother. I promise you the next dance; and you may—yes, you may sit beside me at supper.

PRINCESSE

(*Aside*) Oh! this is too bad! (*Aloud*) Hélène, you must not keep your friends waiting.

[DUCHESSE *and* PRINCESSE *approach* RAOUL, *as if to take his hand to go off. The* PRINCESSE *reaches him first.* RAOUL *and* PRINCESSE *exeunt.* DUCHESSE *follows, angrily.*

MARQUIS

So they are their own granddaughters.

CHEVALIER

And they are in love with their old lover's grandson.

MARQUIS

Philosophy brings consolation. (*Takes snuff.*) Otherwise one might lament the degeneracy of the age.

CHEVALIER

In our time, Marquis——

DUCHESSE FOLLOWS, ANGRILY

MARQUIS

Ladies waited to be wooed.

CHEVALIER

And kept their lovers waiting.

MARQUIS

Sometimes as long as sixty-five years.

CHEVALIER

Now—it is incredible!—the women of whom we thought so highly have, within a short half-hour of their change, both openly—I say openly——

MARQUIS

Shamelessly, Chevalier.

CHEVALIER

Declared almost a passion. Is this the world of the young? We have lived too long.

MARQUIS

That I think (*takes snuff*) would be impossible. But things for the moment are disagreeable.

Enter ALDEBARAN

CHEVALIER (*violently*)

You, sir—you are the cause of all this trouble!

ALDEBARAN

What trouble? I converted two old ladies into two young ladies. Are they not beautiful enough?

MARQUIS

They are what they were sixty-five years before.

ALDEBARAN

They declared their love for you before their transformation—why, then, do you still await your own change?

CHEVALIER

Because—it is embarrassing and—humiliating—because, in fact, they forgot the existence of that passion directly they recovered their youth.

ALDEBARAN

Ah! that was bad; but yet, was it unexpected? Did you, gentlemen, think to preserve, or to win, the love of young and beautiful women?

MARQUIS

Answer, Chevalier.

CHEVALIER

We thought that two gallant gentlemen, although no longer—ahem!—quite young, had so effectually

touched their hearts by long devotion that their image was fixed indelibly.

ALDEBARAN

So it was, by time.

CHEVALIER

Then——

ALDEBARAN

But time flew back, and each year as it dropped from their heads carried with it something of the affection which they felt for you. What was left when all the years of devotion were gone?

MARQUIS

Ta-ta. We waste our time in regrets. Can nothing be done, Baron?

ALDEBARAN

You, too, would renew your youth, M. le Marquis? You—a man of the world—a man of experience!

MARQUIS

Not I, indeed. I have lived. Cure my sciatica and—and one or two other little things, and I envy no man.

CHEVALIER

I would have my time over again. Age brings experience, but youth—ah! youth.

MARQUIS

I want nothing but the restoration of things as they were. Baron, can that be done?

ALDEBARAN

What do you ask me? These ladies are young again—they enjoy the delirium of beauty, the triumphs of the salon, the troops of lovers. Would you deprive them of these?

CHEVALIER

But they could not enjoy them—without us.

MARQUIS

He cannot understand, Baron, what forgetfulness can do. They would enjoy without thinking of us.

ALDEBARAN

Yet you would take from them this enjoyment.

MARQUIS (*slowly*)

Youth is made up of anticipations never realised (*takes snuff*)—of ambitions which never satisfy—of rivalries, especially among women,

which embitter—of disappointments which sadden Would it not be well to spare them these?

CHEVALIER

Yes, let us spare the ladies what we can.

MARQUIS

Later on we have memories (*takes snuff*) all the disappointments are forgotten—we remember only the happiness.

CHEVALIER

True. They would like to remember the happiness.

MARQUIS

To talk of these things in a quiet salon like this, hung with pictures of ourselves when we were young, to enjoy a quiet game of cards—this constitutes the greatest happiness of life.

ALDEBARAN

You think so? Very well.

MARQUIS

Therefore let us not be selfish—let us, for these dear ladies' sakes, provide them with the means of being happy.

CHEVALIER

We will not be selfish.

MARQUIS

Since we, their truest friends, cannot be young again, let them, so that we may continue to watch over them, become old once more.

CHEVALIER

That will certainly be best for them.

MARQUIS

Baron, give us back the companions of our lives, the dear delightful women who made us so unhappy when we were young, and so happy when we became old.

CHEVALIER

I would rather be young with them ; but if not, then——

MARQUIS

You will remark, Baron, that we seek nothing but the happiness of our mistresses.

ALDEBARAN

Gentlemen, your motives do you the greatest credit. An unselfish wish such as yours, M. le Marquis, is rare in this selfish world. It shall be as you desire.

[*The ladies come in together, masked.*

Enter DUCHESSE, PRINCESSE, *and* RAOUL

RAOUL (*to* DUCHESSE)

I assure you, Madame——

DUCHESSE

Oh, Monsieur! there is no need. Besides, it is not to you that I need look for *assurance.*

RAOUL (*to* PRINCESSE)

Pray, Madame, take no heed.

PRINCESSE

Believe me, Monsieur, I shall not—neither of you nor of others unworthy my regard.

DUCHESSE

If you mean that graceful speech for me, Madame——

RAOUL

Ladies, I entreat.

PRINCESSE

I mean what I say—no more.

DUCHESSE (*with low curtsey*)

Madame!

PRINCESSE (*same business*)

Madame!

DUCHESSE

As for you, Monsieur——

PRINCESSE

Yes, Monsieur, as for you——

'WHAT HAVE I DONE?'

RAOUL

What *have* I done?

DUCHESSE

Done! My dear, he asks what he has done.

PRINCESSE

Did one ever hear the like?

RAOUL (*to* DUCHESSE)

Madame, it is time for our minuet.

DUCHESSE

I shall dance no more to-night, Monsieur.

RAOUL (*to* PRINCESSE)

Madame, may I have the honour?

PRINCESSE

Monsieur, I am too fatigued.

RAOUL

Cornelius Agrippa or Aldebaran must have bewitched them!

[DUCHESSE *and* PRINCESSE *turn from each other.*

ALDEBARAN (*steps forward*)

Permit me, ladies——

DUCHESSE

Pardon me, sir——

ALDEBARAN

Ah! you do not remember—how should you? May I ask, however, that you will listen to me for a moment—one moment only? Allow me.

[*He places them at the card-table and spinet.*

DUCHESSE

I feel as if my head were turning round.

PRINCESSE

The room swims before my eyes.

THEY ARE OLD AGAIN

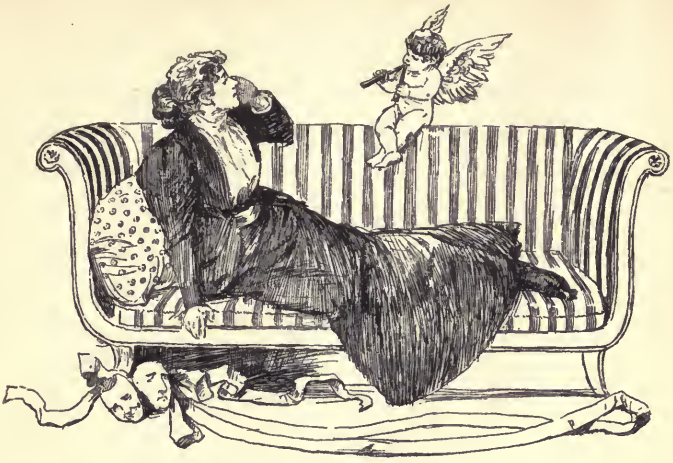
[*They are placed exactly as at end of Act I.* ALDEBARAN *focusses their eyes, makes passes; same movement as before of mesmeric influence.* ALDEBARAN *steps behind curtain. A few moments elapse. They start—the dominoes have fallen off. They are old again.* PRINCESSE *sings.*

PRINCESSE

When April suns light up the hills,
And young men woo, and maidens wait,
When children wreathe fresh daffodils,
Our hopes of spring, of bygone spring, we tell too late.

When lovers whisper as they pass,
When damsels hear with blushing cheek,
When tabors play for lad and lass,
Ah! then of love, of perished love, we sadly speak.

CURTAIN *as* MARQUIS *and* CHEVALIER *advance to ladies, and stoop to kiss their hands. Music heard up to the last.*



'SHE IS AWAKENED'

THE VOICE OF LOVE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

PAUL PERIGAL.	LILIAN TRAVERS.
CLAUDE FORRESTER.	JANE (Servant).

Morning Room. Table with breakfast laid—newspapers—playbills—over a chair hangs a great poster with red letters. LILIAN *discovered with a book. While she speaks she walks about the room—sits down—walks about again—always studying the words of the book between her own words.*

LILIAN

I *cannot* get the words. They dance before my eyes. And I ought to have been word-perfect

long ago. If I do get them, some of them seem such dreadful nonsense. Why, oh why, did the Professor choose such a part as Juliet for my first appearance? [*Repeating woodenly.*

'Give me my Romeo, and when he shall die
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
(*Repeats absurdly*, 'Cut him out in little stars,')
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night,
And pay no worship to the garish sun.'

Now, how is a poor girl to say those words seriously? The Professor is always telling me that it's the voice of Love. If it is, the voice of Love says very odd things. 'Remember, child,' dear old Daddy continually tells me, 'remember, do remember, that you are Juliet, and that you love Romeo.' Well, what of that? I love the dear old Daddy, but goodness knows I don't want to cut him out in little stars! Oh, dear, what curious constellations he would make! He ought to be down to his breakfast by now, dear old Daddy! I suppose he was late last night. Now that he no longer acts himself there is nothing he loves so much as seeing other people act. And that is very curious, because he says that nobody *can* act nowadays. I wish he had carried his theory into practice with regard to Juliet and poor me.

But he wouldn't—he was as determined as he could be. His old friend Mr. Conyers, the

'MY DEAR CHILD, YOU HAVE EVERY QUALIFICATION FOR THE PART'

manager of the Parnassus, wanted a Juliet, and that Juliet I was to be. 'My dear child,' Daddy said, 'you have every qualification for the part,' and

then he added rather in an Irish fashion, 'and those qualifications you have not got, my dear, I will give you.' Well, if he can make me speak those lines and not seem a fool he will do wonders. (*Looking at book again.*) No, they puzzle me completely. Suppose I looked at the paper for a change. (*Looking through paper.*) Last Night in Parliament—The Jericho Mission—Theatre Royal, Parnassus. Oh, dear, shall I never get away from that? 'On Wednesday, the 16th of June, this theatre will re-open with a performance of *Romeo and Juliet.* The merits of Mr. Godfrey's Romeo are already known and are sure to command attraction. The interest of the occasion will be enhanced by the appearance of a new actress as Juliet. Miss Lilian Travers is a pupil of Mr. Paul Perigal, who has been her guardian since the death of her parents a few years ago. We hear great things of the *débutante's* powers. Her master's name alone will ensure for her an indulgent audience.' Indulgent! Yes, I daresay—especially if I stumble over my train in the ball-room scene. I wish I could forget it. Let me look at something else. This poster with the red letters. (*Holds it up.*) 'JULIET. MISS LILIAN TRAVERS.' That's a cheerful sort of thing to look at, isn't it? Here's another paper. The War in the Soudan. Why, that is where dear old Claude has gone.

When was it he came to say good-bye to me? Four years ago in this very month of May—in the orchard at my dear father's parsonage—the apple blossoms were out. Four years ago! I was

'THE APPLE BLOSSOMS WERE OUT'

fourteen—the very age of Juliet—he had just got his commission, and his regiment was going abroad. I wonder if he has remembered me—I wonder. Well, it is no use thinking or wondering about the old days. (*Throws down paper unread.*) I have

my way to make, and my part to learn. Let me try my best to please Daddy this morning.

[*Takes book and walks about, repeating lines to herself.*

PERIGAL, *a retired actor, old-fashioned, courtly; got up with wig and dressing-gown, and juvenile air, but an old man, enters as she recites.*

'Good father, I beseech you on my knees
Hear me with patience but to speak a word!'

[*Seeing him*

I needn't go on my knees to you, Daddy, need I, to say Good morning?

PERIGAL (*kissing her*)

No, no—my dear—no. Hard at work already, I see—good child—good child. We'll have our little rehearsal directly—if, my dear, you are equal to the exertion. It is but three weeks now to the eventful night—and that is not a bit too far off.

LILIAN

No, dear, indeed. I only wish it was farther off still—out of sight altogether.

PERIGAL

My child, my child! we must not lose courage.

Remember we have our duties to Art—yes, and to the British Public, too. We must do our very best to fulfil them.

LILIAN

Yes, dear, and indeed I will do my best, though I feel my duty to you much more than I do to Art and the British Public put together.

PERIGAL

There are some who will tell you that the two are not always allied ; but take an old actor's word for it that the public is the best critic when all's done.

LILIAN

Then, I hope, Daddy, they'll be kind to me. What did you do with yourself yesterday ?

PERIGAL

I attended two rehearsals in the morning ; I assisted at a *matinée*, so called because it was given in the afternoon ; I had my modest little dinner at the club, and then, of course, I went on to the new play at the Haymarket.

LILIAN

Was it good ?

PERIGAL

Good ? Yes ; from some points of view. The

new school of actors possess purpose, ambition, youth, fire, talent—but——

LILIAN

What does that ominous *but* mean, Daddy?

PERIGAL

It means, my dear, that they are wanting in—that they have not precisely caught—that they fail to acquire—that, in short, they are——

LILIAN

Not of the old school, eh, Daddy? Isn't that about it?

PERIGAL

Well, well, my dear—I daresay you are right. *Autres temps, autres mœurs*—I cannot forget their predecessors. Ah—there are few of the *vieille garde* left now. And if I were put up in 'Richard the Third' to-morrow——

LILIAN

All the town would flock to see you.

PERIGAL

No—child—no. (*Sorrowfully.*) Once, perhaps, they might. Once—long ago. But it's no use dwelling on old memories.

LILIAN (*half aside*)

No, Daddy, it's no use.

PERIGAL

We must deal with the present—we must welcome genius and talent, even if they take a shape

'WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT, FAIR JULIET?'

new and strange to us. And that, my child, is what I hope from you.

LILIAN

Yes, I am to blend the old and the new, am I

not? To join your experience to my inspiration. (PERIGAL *nods.*) Only, so far as I can see, the partnership is incomplete. It wants the inspiration.

PERIGAL

Patience! patience!—that will come—meanwhile let us have breakfast. (*Takes poster off the chair and holds it up.*) What do you think of it, fair Juliet?

LILIAN

I hate it. Put it out of my sight.

[LILIAN *rings—servant brings in dishes, &c.*

LILIAN

Oh, Daddy, I was nearly forgetting. What do you think Jane tells me? A young gentleman called this morning soon after nine, and asked to see me.

PERIGAL

To see you?

LILIAN

Yes; and when he was told I was engaged, he said he would come back, and it didn't matter about his name.

PERIGAL

A young gentleman—already? My dear, when you have made your success you will have plenty of such impertinent calls from people who dare to

call themselves gentlemen, and you may as well be prepared for that. But already! Before you have even appeared!

LILIAN

I suppose it is that dreadful paragraph I have just been reading. [*Gives him newspaper.*

PERIGAL (*runs over paragraph with delight*)

I suppose it may be so—Paul Perigal's name is not forgotten yet! But this must be put a stop to at once. (*Ringing.*) Jane! If the young *gentleman* who was here this morning calls again, show him in to me in my study—you understand.

JANE (*who has entered to bell*)

Yes, sir. [*Exit* JANE.

PERIGAL

I'll soon settle him. Greater impudence I never heard. If he gets to you, my dear, it shall be over my prostrate corpse, through oceans of gore. Don't be alarmed.

LILIAN

I'm not a bit. But who can it be? I don't know any young gentlemen.

PERIGAL

No, my dear; and when the time comes for more such young gentlemen to call, you will have

the bulwark of my experience, which has been in such matters peculiar and extensive. Well, well; now to look at the papers. What have we here? *Matinée—matinée* again—at the Palladium. What paper's this?—the *Daily Intelligence.* Ha! his own play reviewed by himself! Not usual, I am glad to say, in the English Press. They say Garrick used to write about his own performances. I have never believed it. Garrick was an Actor! An Actor *could* not do such a thing. Ha! Here's something that may interest you. Haven't you a cousin in the army—Claude Forrester?

LILIAN

Not really a cousin, Daddy—only a connection. But he was my playfellow in my childhood, and we always called each other cousins.

PERIGAL

By gad, child, if he were your cousin you might be proud of him!

LILIAN

Ah, dear old Claude! What is it, Daddy?

PERIGAL (*reading*)

'In my last letter but one I was unable to give you the name of the young officer who performed the brilliant deed of rescuing, single-handed, a wounded man from a party of five Arab assailants

under a heavy fire from the Arab lines. I now learn that it was Mr. Claude Forrester, of the Life Guards. It is a marvel that Mr. Forrester was not killed instead of being, as I believe he is, invalided home for the present. No doubt in such a matter as this valour will find its just recompense.'

LILIAN

Dear old Claude! Fancy his doing that! But, of course, can we fancy his doing anything else!

PERIGAL

Yes—yes—a fine fellow—a very fine fellow—I should like to know him. But now, child, to business. Everything is arranged for a rehearsal for you two days hence. And I have ordered this poster—that you don't like. It will be stuck up all over London.

LILIAN

Oh, Daddy, don't.

PERIGAL

My child, I don't like it any more than you do; in my days one line in the bills was enough—Shylock, by Mr. Paul Perigal—but we must move with the times—we must move with the times. And talking of moving, let us see how we are getting on with our steps for the ball-room scene. Now, then, I am Capulet—

You are welcome gentlemen. Come, musicians, play—
A hall! A hall! Give room! and foot it, girls.

[*He takes a fiddle and goes through a few steps with her. She dances correctly, but without animation.*

PERIGAL

Yes, child, that will do very nicely—very nicely. And now just a moment, take a last look at the book, and we will go on to the words. (*As she sits down and takes up book again* PERIGAL *continues, aside*) Poor child, poor child—what are we to do? I am dreadfully afraid about her success, and it means so much to her! Why didn't I bring her out in comedy instead of Juliet? Well—because she has everything that the part wants except one little thing—the want of which I did not foresee—passion! A passionless Juliet! One might as well have a benevolent Mephistopheles — perhaps the new school will give us one some day. Well, we must do what we can. (*Aloud*) Now, Lilian, let us to business, and remember how much depends on the business. Fame, fortune, boundless adulation will be yours if you will only play this part as I want you to.

LILIAN

I will do my very best indeed, Daddy. I will

try all I can. If I can only imitate you exactly in the passages that puzzle me so much!

PERIGAL

Ah! But that's just it, my darling. Imitation is not acting. Acting must come from a blending of nature and art.

HE TAKES A FIDDLE AND GOES THROUGH A FEW STEPS WITH HER

LILIAN

I am very sorry I am so dull, Daddy.

PERIGAL

You are not dull, you are—well—you are cold. An actress must not be cold. Think what it is to be an actress!

LILIAN

It is to have your name on posters five feet long.

PERIGAL

That's nothing.

LILIAN

To have your photograph in all the shop windows.

PERIGAL

That's less than nothing. Let me tell you, child, what an actress is. An actress is a woman who knows all the workings of the heart and can call them up at will to delight, to dazzle, to enthral, to terrify the audience on whose inmost feelings she plays as a violinist plays on his magic strings. She is a perfect picture, but a picture that is always changing, because there is no pause in the tide of human passion. She is a mirror in which her audience see their own images, or rather the images of what they would like to be. She inspires men to great deeds; she holds them back from what is mean and base. She makes them weep and laugh at will; she is greater than the greatest, because, while the great command men's actions, she alone can sway their in-

most thoughts, their unborn wishes, with her all-compelling voice. Ah! I have seen such acting—once. Try to be like *her*; and do not you believe

'OH, DADDY, IT FRIGHTENS ME—I SHALL NEVER BE ABLE TO DO ALL THAT'

them, child, when they tell you that the player's career is but a brilliant bubble, forgotten as soon as its short radiance is gone. No, child, the great

player's memory is imperishable—it is preserved in material *ære perennius*—more lasting than any metal—for it is written in the human heart. And that, Lilian, is what it is to be an actress.

LILIAN

Oh, Daddy, it frightens me—I shall never be able to do all that.

PERIGAL

Nonsense, child, you have it all in you, I know. The difficulty is to dig down to it, or up to it, and that is what I have got to do if I can. Now, let us take Act II. Scene V. This chair is the window —I am Romeo. (*Poses himself.*) Now remember what the situation is. Juliet is in love—nay, more, she is *loved*, and she cannot bear to be parted from her lover—there must be passion in every breath. Now try. 'Wilt thou be gone?'

LILIAN

'Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day:
It was the nightingale and not the lark
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear.
Nightly she sings in the pomegranate-tree—
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale—'

PERIGAL (*starting with impatience*)

No—no—no! That'll never do. It's not at all like it. *Juliet is in love!* Shall I never make

you understand what that means? Try again; see if you cannot get a little tremor of emotion into your speech——

[LILIAN *repeats first two lines again.*

PERIGAL (*jumps about*)

No—no—worse and worse! There's no love in a wobbling voice——

LILIAN (*huffy*)

I wish there was no such thing as love in the wobbling world!

PERIGAL

Poor child—poor child—forgive me for being impatient. After all, how should you know what the voice of Love means?

LILIAN

Well, Daddy, it's only too clear that I don't How am I to learn?

PERIGAL

How, indeed? How can you be taught? Love, my dear, is extravagant in its words, just because words are too poor to express it—a spendthrift of base coinage. What can I tell you of love? Love turns a woman into a goddess. How I remember thirty or, by 'r lady, thirty-five years ago

when love turned a woman into a goddess for me —and the transformation had its ready reason. Who would care for a mere woman when he can worship a goddess? What a time it was—when one was young enough for the divine exaltation of love! That is it—only the young who still feel it can explain it. There must be plenty of young fellows who would be glad to expound the mystery to you! If one could but find one of the right stamp! If a kindly chance would but drop one from the clouds! One from the clouds!

LILIAN

Dear old Daddy! You are actually crying for the moon!

[JANE'S *and* FORRESTER'S *voices heard outside.*

FORRESTER'S *voice outside*

Of course you are quite right—always obey orders—rule of the Service; but there are exceptions—this is one—Mr. Perigal will forgive you——

LILIAN

What is all this?

JANE (*opening door*)

If you please, sir, the young gentleman—he would come in,

PERIGAL (*running to door*)

He shall come in through my body, then. My sword, Lilian—or the poker!

'PRAY FORGIVE THIS INTRUSION, SIR'

CLAUDE (*entering*)

Pray forgive this intrusion, sir; I am sure you will when——Lilian!

LILIAN (*seeing him*)

Claude! You dear old boy! Daddy, it's Claude!

PERIGAL

So I gathered from your first remark. May I ask, sir——

CLAUDE

Certainly, sir. I am Claude Forrester. I am —or rather was—Miss Travers's kind of a cousin, and I am only just back from foreign service. I discovered from a paragraph in a newspaper that Miss Travers was your ward and pupil. So I ventured to come here.

LILIAN

Oh, Claude, of course you did!

PERIGAL

Yes, yes—of course he did. (*Aside while* LILIAN *and* CLAUDE *talk*) Of course he did. Now let us see. What if this should be the answer to my wish? The young fellow dropped from the clouds! A cousin—and yet no cousin—the very thing. He looks as if he wouldn't make a bad Romeo. The situation is desperate; suppose I put it to the touch. (*Aloud*) Mr. Forrester, I am delighted; I am proud to make your acquaintance.

I told Lily just now I should like to make it. I have heard of your exploit. It made me proud of you and proud of my country.

CLAUDE

Oh! sir, that was nothing; I just did my duty——

PERIGAL

Oh! Then I wish people as a rule did their duty one quarter as well. But modesty is a virtue, and not too common a one. (*Aside*) I like his looks more and more. I *will* try it. I can see her eyes softening now just as some other eyes once softened. Well—well—that's gone. (*Aloud*) Lilian! (*She starts and turns round.*) We must not neglect our little rehearsal too much—but I have no doubt you and your cousin have much to say to each other?

LILIAN

Oh, yes, Daddy!

PERIGAL

Very well. I will give some directions about the printing and rejoin you shortly. Mr. Forrester, let me once again shake you by the hand.

[*Does so.*

CLAUDE

Oh, sir, you make too much of it.

PERIGAL

No, no, I don't. I know what to make much of. Trust an old actor for that. (*At door, aside*) An experiment—an experiment. But I'll wager it will succeed, and then so will my pupil! [*Exit.*

CLAUDE

Lily! Is it possible that four years should make such a difference?

LILIAN

What difference, Claude? You knew me directly.

CLAUDE

Of course I did. But four years ago you were a little fairy of a child. And now what are you, Lily?

LILIAN

Just what I was then, Claude.

CLAUDE

No, you are glorified—you have grown into a woman, and a beautiful one——

LILIAN

Don't flatter, Claude; you never used to.

CLAUDE

There is no flattery in——

LILIAN

Now, no nonsense, Claude. Were you badly wounded in that dreadful—that splendid fight?

CLAUDE

No, Lily, not badly—that is, the doctors wouldn't let me stay there, and certainly the voyage has made a new man of me.

LILIAN

Poor Claude! To be so brave and to suffer so much, for I know you did, I can see the traces of it still. But you are well now?

CLAUDE

Yes, Lily, better than I have ever been before. But tell me about yourself?

LILIAN

Well! you know Mr. Perigal, one of my father's oldest friends, is my guardian and tutor. Poor papa could leave me but very little money, and Mr. Perigal is not rich. So I had to decide on making my own way somehow, and Mr. Perigal is teaching me to act.

CLAUDE

To act!

LILIAN

Why, you must have known that from the paper!

CLAUDE

Yes, but it still seems so strange! My little cousin turning into a great actress!

LILIAN

No, Claude, I don't think I shall ever be that. I know I have some turn for it, but—but I don't like the idea. The notion of that sea of faces looking at me, criticising one's every word; one's every posture, one's face, one's voice becoming public property—it frightens me and hurts me—but I don't like to tell Daddy so. And oh! Look at this horrid poster. [*Holds it up.*

CLAUDE

Poor little Lily! Do you remember when we parted?

LILIAN

Yes, Claude—I remember.

CLAUDE

The apple blossoms were out. We stood beneath the great tree in the orchard. Your hair was flying in the breeze. Your eyes were soft—they were always the softest, sweetest eyes in the

world. I kissed you good-bye, and you promised you would not forget me. Lily, have you kept that promise?

LILIAN

Yes, Claude, I have.

'LOOK AT THIS HORRID POSTER'

CLAUDE

And I vowed—do you remember, Lily, what I vowed?

LILIAN

I don't know, Claude.

CLAUDE

Lily, you must remember. I vowed—I vowed

that I should think of you ever and aye, whatever befell me. I vowed that I would come back to you as soon as Fate would let me, and that when I came back, I should ask you if you cared for me still.

LILIAN

Ah! As if I had forgotten!

CLAUDE

Let me bring it back to your memory again. Lily, since then I have been in many strange places of the world, seen many strange and beautiful and dreadful sights—been many a time at close touch with death. But in all that time, not a day has passed that I have not thought of you, thought of our parting, looked forward to our meeting. See, here are the photograph and the lock of hair you gave me. Every day in all that time I have kissed them both. Lily, by the memory of the weary hours that have been solaced by the thought of you, by the memory of the child I loved, tell me if—if——

LILIAN

If what, Claude?

CLAUDE

If you love me as I love you. No, you cannot

do that. For to me, this love is as a sudden brightness that lights up all the past, and may turn the future to splendour. Lily! For four years I have

KNEELS AND KISSES HER HAND

dreamed of this meeting, but only now do I know how much it seems to me, how much depends upon your answer. Do you understand me, Lily?

LILIAN

Yes—I understand—I see it all now!

CLAUDE

You see, then, that I love you, that there is no other woman in the world for me but you—that you are my heart—my life. Do you see that?

[*Kneels and kisses her hand.*

LILIAN

I see one thing clearly. Daddy has reproached me often in his lessons with having no heart. I have none! Do not shrink from me. It is because I have given it all to you—had given it all to you long ago, and never knew it till now.

CLAUDE

My darling!

LILIAN

My hero! my love! Ah! I believe I could act Juliet now.

CLAUDE

Is there any need now? (*Takes up poster.*) Let me tear it up.

LILIAN

No, no. It will serve to recall many things.

CLAUDE

But you will not act now?

LILIAN

To act what has come to me as a revelation? Oh! no, no, Claude! I should hate to do it. Daddy has told me what an actress is: a great and a good woman if she uses her divine gift rightly. But an actress must be ready to assume to others what she feels only for one. And I could not do it.

CLAUDE

My darling, you must not. You will not mind sharing a soldier's life, Lily?

LILIAN

I should not mind sharing any life with you. But I must think of poor Daddy; he will be so disappointed at losing his pet pupil. How can I soften the blow to him?

CLAUDE

How, indeed? H'm—stop—I have an idea. Soldier officers are expected to have ideas in these days of examinations. Didn't you say just now that you felt as if you understood Juliet at last?

LILIAN

Yes, Claude, I did.

CLAUDE

Then—stop! Here comes Mr. Perigal—follow my notion.

Enter PERIGAL

PERIGAL

Young people, you have had your talk, and I hope it has been a pleasant one.

CLAUDE

Very pleasant, thank you, sir.

PERIGAL

Well, talk is talk and business is business; we must get to business again. (*Aside*) The experiment *has* succeeded, the girl looks transformed. (*Aloud*) Don't go, Mr. Forrester, you may help us with your advice (*aside*) and—ahem!—example.

CLAUDE

Miss Travers was telling me, sir, that she felt very nervous about the part—I have ventured to give her some encouragement. I think you will find she is less nervous now.

PERIGAL

Ah! just as I hoped, just as I hoped! Now, Lilian, we will take, if you please, the speech that

always puzzled you so much, 'Give me my Romeo' —eh?

LILIAN (*looking at* CLAUDE)

'Give me my Romeo: and, when he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night
And pay no worship to the garish sun.'

PERIGAL

Brava!—brava! The true touch at last. I always said the girl was an actress. Mr. Forrester, I am greatly obliged to you. Lilian, what a triumph your appearance will be on the 16th!

LILIAN

Daddy—that triumph can never be—you must find another Juliet. There are plenty of them.

PERIGAL

Why—what?

LILIAN

You see, Daddy, Claude taught me. And now that I have learnt it, I have learnt something else too—— [*Takes* CLAUDE'S *hand.*

PERIGAL

What's that? What's that?

CLAUDE

I return you the poster, sir. It will not be wanted.

LILIAN

No. It will not be wanted.

PERIGAL

And I've spoiled it all! Oh! Lilian—Juliet—Juliet—Lilian! She is awakened. She knows the voice of Love! Oh! what a loss! what a loss!

[*Sinks into a chair, and buries his face in his hands.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

PHILIP AINSLIE, Fellow and Lecturer, Christ's College, Cambridge.
JAMES SEVENOKE, Country Gentleman.
ELEANOR INGRESS } American School Teachers.
MAMIE ELGOOD }

ACT I

Evening. Drawing-room of Derwentwater Hotel. French windows to the ground View of lake through the windows, which open on a lawn. Door on R.

ELEANOR *and* MAMIE *discovered.* ELEANOR *sitting with her hands crossed, looking at the lake.* MAMIE *at window.*

MAMIE

Our last evening, dear. To-morrow that hateful Liverpool. Then the transit, and then——

ELEANOR

Then to work again—the schoolroom and the children. Well, Mamie, we've had a lovely holiday; there can never, never, never happen such another.

MAMIE

I shall remember London as a kind of mirage. We saw many people—interesting and otherwise—but we never got to know them.

ELEANOR

Too many people. But Chester! Ah!

MAMIE

Chester! Ah! that was splendid. And the cathedrals! Oh!

ELEANOR

And the castles! Oh!

MAMIE

Oh! They were delightful. And the Lakes! Oh! the last fortnight at the Lakes! Oh! shall we ever, ever, ever forget Grasmere, and Llewellyn, and Rydal Water? [*Clasps her hands.*

ELEANOR (*sighs*)

Impossible.

MAMIE

And (*stealing across the room, and bending over* ELEANOR) shall we ever, ever, ever forget what made that fortnight so delightful? (ELEANOR *is silent.*) Did ever two simple American girls have such an adventure before? To make the acquaintance of two young men—and such young men—and to go about with them——

ELEANOR

Mamie, dear, don't say 'go about' with them. It so happened that their route fell in with ours.

MAMIE

Yes, dear, that is exactly what I meant. Their route fell in with ours. Very strange it was. Mr. Sevenoke often remarked upon the curious coincidence. Come now, Eleanor, shall we readily forget these—strangers?

ELEANOR (*rises and walks to the piano*)

I don't want to forget them. (*Sits down and plays.* MAMIE *goes to window and looks out.* ELEANOR *drops her face in her hands. Springs to her feet; brushes away the tears.*) Why should we? I don't want ever to forget them, Mamie.

MAMIE

Why should we forget them?

ELEANOR

Yet we are but simple, casual acquaintances. Only it has been a great happiness to learn what a pleasant creature an English gentleman may be

ENTER, BY THE WINDOW, PHILIP AINSLIE AND JAMES SEVENOKE

MAMIE

Yes, a great happiness. And now it is all over.

ELEANOR

Yes, it is all over.

MAMIE

They won't desert us on our very last evening will they? Ah! no! it would be too unkind.

Enter WAITER *with tray*

The gentlemen ordered coffee in here.

MAMIE (*with dignity*)

Thank you. (*Exit* WAITER.) What did I tell you?

Enter, by the window, PHILIP AINSLIE *and* JAMES SEVENOKE *in morning dress.*

MAMIE (*offers coffee*)

Will you have coffee, Nelly? Mr. Sevenoke, coffee? Mr. Ainslie?

[AINSLIE *declines. Waits on* ELEANOR. *Takes her cup and puts it back in tray. He stands beside her in the window, and they talk earnestly.* JAMES SEVENOKE *and* MAMIE *go down stage.*

JAMES

Is it possible, Miss Elgood, that you are really going to leave us to-morrow.

MAMIE

It is not only possible, Mr. Sevenoke, it is quite certain. We have secured our cabin, and we have to start at four o'clock to-morrow afternoon. This day week we shall be back again in New York.

[*Sighs.*

JAMES

You take back with you, Miss Mamie, I hope, some pleasant remembrances?

MAMIE

Oh! yes.

JAMES

You will take with you, too, a broken heart.

MAMIE

Really!

JAMES

Oh! don't look surprised. Mine has gone into little bits. I wish you'd stick them together again.

MAMIE

Shall I thank you, Mr. Sevenoke, for the present of a worthless article? Why, I believe you once

told me that you were engaged to—what was her name? Hadn't you better ask her about the sticking together?

JAMES

Ah! but if I were *not* engaged.

MAMIE

If! Such virtue—or is it the other thing?—in that *if*.

JAMES

Ah! if.

MAMIE

But as things are we will just go on being friends, and I shall carry away, not the snippets of a heart, but the recollection of a time that has been very pleasant.

JAMES

Very pleasant.

MAMIE

I suppose because the Lake country is so lovely.

JAMES

I have felt myself the strange beauty of the country. That alone, of course, has made the last fortnight the most delightful to me I have ever known.

MAMIE

Shall you tell your *fiancée* how much you enjoyed the—beauty of the country?

JAMES

My *fiancée!* I had to get engaged to her—my father was her guardian, and—well—I don't know if——

MAMIE

Yes—I quite understand. And now no more nonsense. Shall we go out on the lawn?

JAMES

If we must. [*Sighs.*

MAMIE

And see the sun set over the water? It will be much better than talking about hearts and snippets —won't it?

[*They go up stage and leave the room by the window. By this time* ELEANOR *and* PHILIP, *who have been talking earnestly, have left the window, and she is sitting at the piano. He stands over her.*

PHILIP

The days have gone like a dream.

ELEANOR (*repeats*)

Like a dream.

PHILIP

It seems impossible that I have been in lakeland—with you—a whole fortnight.

ELEANOR

It is a charming country, Mr. Ainslie. I shall never forget the lakes and the mountains. There

SHE IS SITTING AT THE PIANO. HE STANDS OVER HER

are lakes and mountains in our own country much bigger, but not so lovely.

PHILIP

Will you remember sometimes, Miss Ingress, your companions in this place?

ELEANOR

I shall always remember—both of you, Mr. Ainslie.

PHILIP

I wish I could have shown you Cambridge and —if you would care to see them—my rooms.

ELEANOR

I should like to see Cambridge.

PHILIP

You know that I am a lecturer in my college. It is not a way of life that brings riches—but it brings a sufficiency—if I could only show you Cambridge—and my place in it.

ELEANOR

Alas! Mr. Ainslie, it is impossible.

PHILIP

Oh! but soon—next year.

ELEANOR

I do not suppose that I shall ever again get over here.

PHILIP

Never again? Oh! But the journey is so very short—it is nothing.

ELEANOR

If it is nothing, Mr. Ainslie, why do you not cross the ocean to see—the States?

PHILIP (*eagerly*)

Yes, yes. Tell me where I can find you—give me an address. Let me write to you, Miss Ingress—let me—— (*He sees* MAMIE *and* JAMES *outside, and stands up.*) You will give me your address, Miss Ingress?

ELEANOR

I will write it for you. (*They cross the room to the table, where there are writing materials. She sits down and takes pen and paper.*) There, Mr. Ainslie, a letter to this address will always be forwarded to me. And now, if you please, I will get my hat, and we will go out into the garden with the others. [*Exit.*

PHILIP (*left alone*)

I must speak to her this very night. I will not wait to write—I will make her mine before she leaves the country. (*Kisses the paper.*) She is a

queen! She is a goddess! (*Goes to window meets* JAMES *and* MAMIE *coming back.*)

KISSES THE PAPER

MAMIE

Where is Eleanor, Mr. Ainslie?

PHILIP

She has gone for my hat, I believe—I mean for a pair of gloves. [*Exit* PHILIP *into the garden.*

MAMIE

I will go for my hat, too. It is getting chilly outside.

JAMES

Miss Elgood.

MAMIE

Mr. Sevenoke.

JAMES

Don't you think, Miss Elgood, that it would be a kindness to let these two go out in the boat by themselves? We can watch the sunset effect from the shore, you know. With a cigarette, perhaps.

MAMIE

If you promise to talk no more nonsense about broken hearts.

JAMES

Well, I promise.

MAMIE

Because you see, Mr. Sevenoke, if you were serious I should be a very wicked person to listen to a man already engaged. And, honestly, hearts are not things to chaff about.

JAMES

I obey, because I must. I will do it with a

good grace, and only ask if there is anything I could do for you to make these too fleeting hours flit pleasantly?

MAMIE

Thank you very much, Mr. Sevenoke. If you could give us your society and Mr. Ainslie's for another week or two it would be pleasant. But you can't. We like you both very much. (*Offers him her hand.*) Now, in good camaraderie, no more about hearts. (*They shake hands.*) We are brother and sister.

JAMES

Ah! no! I'm hanged if we are.

MAMIE

Well- cousins?

JAMES

Very—very distant ones. But look here, Miss Elgood, I do so want to do something for you before we—part. Oh! it's an absurd thing for a poor English country squire to say to an American millionaire—but you know what I mean.

MAMIE

We are not all millionaires in America, Mr. Sevenoke—at least, I am not. (*Aside*) Now I'll just try him. (*Aloud*) Of course, poor Eleanor is, but she can't help it. You wouldn't think so to look at her—a millionaire.

JAMES

On the contrary, I suspected it from the beginning, because she's such good form. What is it? Silver mines? Corners in cotton?

MAMIE

Nitrate of petroleum, or something. The dollars come rolling in faster than anybody can count them—a thousand a minute, I believe.

JAMES

Oh! (*Aside*) What will Ainslie say?

MAMIE

Yes. No end to the dollars. Don't tell Mr. Ainslie. (*Aside*) But he is sure to tell him!

JAMES

I won't. A millionaire! Well, I'm sorry. I hoped for better things. Yet it is something to have spent a fortnight in company with a millionaire.

MAMIE

Oh! that's nothing. We think very little of millionaires. Now, Mr. Sevenoke, if you could only show me a real live lord!

JAMES

A real live lord? Why?

MAMIE

Well, you see, we expected to see them standing about at railway stations, and the people going on their knees to them, and we haven't seen one, except now and again afar off.

JAMES

(*Aside*) I will just try her. (*Aloud*) Not seen one close? Oh! but (*mysteriously whispers*) don't you know? (*Points to* PHILIP, *who is outside the window.*) Of course, I was not to tell you—but —well—Philip Ainslie, you know. You are going away to-morrow——

MAMIE

Mr. Ainslie? What about him?

JAMES

Why, he *is* a real live lord. He travels *incog.* He is the Right Honourable Philip, Earl of Carleon, Viscount Cader Idris, and Baron Barmouth. Ainslie is only his family name——

MAMIE

A real—live—lord! Oh! Is he really? A prodigal, profligate, abandoned, steeped-in-wickedness lord?

JAMES

All noble lords are profligates except Philip. He isn't. He is the one exception. Hush! Don't tell anyone. Here is Miss Ingress.

[*He goes up stage and stands at the window looking out.*

'ELEANOR INGRESS! WE HAVE BEEN DECEIVED!

MAMIE (*catches* ELEANOR *by the arm, and drags her to the front.*

Well! Well! Eleanor Ingress! we have been deceived!

ELEANOR

How, dear? Who has deceived us?

MAMIE

We must never—never—never trust an Englishman again. Mr. Ainslie has deceived us!

ELEANOR

Mr. Ainslie?

MAMIE

He isn't Mister at all. He is the Right Honourable Philip, Earl of Carleon, Viscount Cader Idris, and Baron Barmouth! There!

ELEANOR

Nonsense! Who told you?

MAMIE

Mr. Sevenoke. I wasn't to tell anybody. And so I've told you, but don't you hand it on.

ELEANOR

Oh! Mamie! And I thought—Mamie! he does not know who and what we are. We have perhaps deceived him.

MAMIE

He must be told that we are two school teachers taking a holiday.

ELEANOR

Fortunately, we go away to-morrow. Oh! Mamie dear, I'm so sorry. Is the other man a noble lord too?

MAMIE

No, he's only a gentleman.

ELEANOR

Mamie! It must be the most miserable thing —the most soul-destroying thing—to be a noble lord, to have all this respect paid to you for nothing—for nothing at all. Oh! I am so sorry—I am so sorry for Mr. Ainslie. Let us go to our own room, Mamie. I cannot go out with him any more. It was a pleasant dream—while it was a dream.

MAMIE

An Earl and a Viscount and a Baron! Oh, Nell! the double—triple—the sextuple duplicity of the man! [*Exeunt girls.*

JAMES (*looks in*)

Where are they? Gone out by the other door

(*Comes down stage.*) I suppose Mamie has told her. I wonder how she'll take it.

Enter PHILIP

Where are the girls, Jem?

JAMES

I don't know. Thought they were in the garden with you. Come here, old man, I've got something to tell you. (PHILIP *comes down stage.*) Look here, Miss Ingress—you rather like Miss Ingress, don't you?

PHILIP

Rather! Well, yes—yes—I do, as you say—I do—I rather like her. Yes.

JAMES

What do you think she is? Mamie has just told me.

PHILIP

A gentlewoman of the United States. What better could she be?

JAMES

That, of course. She is also, old chap, a millionaire—as rich as they make 'em—rolling and swimming in dollars

PHILIP

A millionaire? Eleanor a millionaire?

'ELEANOR A MILLIONAIRE?'

JAMES (*nods his head*)

Million—millionaire—millionissima—three degrees of comparison in millions.

PHILIP

A millionaire! She must think that I wanted her money. What a horrible thing—what a miserable thing—it must be to be so rich as to receive all this respect for nothing—just nothing at all of one's own doing! I am very sorry. (*Takes the address she had given him.*) I am very sorry indeed—for Miss Ingress. (*Tears up the paper.*) There's an end, Jem. It was a pleasant dream—while it was a dream.

Enter the two girls—without their hats. MAMIE *remains near the door.* JAMES *walks up stage as if to join her. She puts up her hand—he remains standing still.* ELEANOR *walks over to* PHILIP, *who gloomily keeps his eyes fixed on the floor.*

ELEANOR

We have come to say good-bye, Mr. Ainslie—I suppose I may continue to call you by that name. There can be no question of any letters to me, if you please. It is always best, don't you think, to let the whole truth appear at once? However, perhaps you meant kindly—so—good-bye, Mr. Ainslie.

JAMES (*gives her his hand*)

Good-bye, Miss Ingress. Had I known earlier—had things been explained——

ELEANOR

And had I known earlier. But, thank you for your kindness to two insignificant American girls —and again—farewell! (*Bows and retires.*) Come, Mamie.

'I MUST SHAKE HANDS, MR. SEVENOKE'

MAMIE

I *must* shake hands, Mr. Sevenoke. And oh, I *am* so sorry! Oh, why did you tell me? Why? Why? [*Bursts into tears and exit.*

PHILIP

Jem—why did you tell me? Why?

JAMES

Look here, old chap! I've never been in an earthquake—*but*——

CURTAIN *as they look blankly at each other.*

ACT II

The hall of the Cliftonville Hotel facing the Falls of Niagara. Visitors at hotel sit and pass to and fro. Hotel clerk is writing a letter.

(If there is a difficulty as to scenery, screens at the back will serve.)

MAMIE (*comes on sketch-book in hand*)

So I have done a good afternoon's work sitting on that stand and painting. Oh! how the water raced at my feet, tearing along for the grand leap of two hundred feet. (BLACK WAITER *brings her a letter.*) Thank you. (*Sits down on chair in front, opens letter.*) That's right, Nell will come for tea at five, after school. Poor dear Nell! (*Opens sketch-book.*) This was my English sketch-book last year. Here they are—the drawings I made in Lakeland. This is Jem Sevenoke. Poor old Jem—they called him Jem—with his heart in tatters and engaged all the time to another girl. Wicked, inconstant Jem! I am ashamed of Jem.

They called him Jem. He'd got such an honest face. Yet it wasn't unpleasant. Heigho! I sometimes wish—heigho!—and here is the Right Honourable the Earl, and the Most Honourable the Viscount, and the Great Honourable the Baron, all three rolled in one. Wretch! You spoilt it all. As if a girl with Eleanor's spirit could bear to think of aiming at a coronet. Not but what a coronet would suit her. And such a proper young man too—a lecturer in Greek he said he was—in Greek! As if any noble lord ever knew Greek! Oh! but it was a lovely time. (*Turns over the leaves and sighs.*) Here's Derwentwater! Here's the hotel where we said good-bye—a very sad and stupid good-bye it was. Those poor boys—they had been deceivers—yes, one could not forgive that —but they looked just too wretched and miserable for words. I sometimes wish—(*sighs again*). I've looked in the papers, but I have never found any mention of the noble lord. I suppose he is pursuing his profligate career in obscurity. Yet he did not look it. I declare he looked just what an honest, hardworking, truthful young man should look—that and nothing more. And there's Jem—they called him Jem. Oh well! it's no use. We shall never set eyes upon either of them any more. Yet—as to Nell—it's my belief she thinks about him still.

VOICE (*outside*)

Here we are! What a splendid view! Take the things in, will you? You go on to look at the Falls, old man, I'll join you directly.

MAMIE (*jumps*)

Why—why—why—that's his voice—that's Jem Sevenoke's voice. I should know that voice anywhere. Oh! Heavens! Jem Sevenoke! We shall see him again! Jem! Oh! But I suppose he's got his wife with him—the girl he didn't care about. He must be taking his honeymoon in the States.

[JAMES *enters carrying a handbag*, NEGRO *comes after with portmanteaux, &c. He goes to hotel clerk and converses about rooms.*

MAMIE

Good Gracious! He seems alone. Yet he was talking to some one. He said 'Old man.' I wonder if an Englishman on his honeymoon generally calls his bride 'Old man'? They're very unlike us. It's quite possible. This decides me never, never, never to marry an Englishman. Nobody shall ever call me 'Old man.'

[JAMES *concludes his business, and, turning, meets* MAMIE.

MAMIE

Mr. Sevenoke!

JAMES

Mamie! If it isn't Mamie! I mean Miss Elgood. Who on earth would have expected——

MAMIE

Who would have expected to meet Mr. Sevenoke? You are on your honeymoon, Mr. Sevenoke? Is it your wife you have left behind in the carriage?

JAMES

My wife! I haven't got a wife!

MAMIE

But—you told me—you said—that you were engaged.

JAMES

So I was. But you see in this case the *expected* —at least I expected it—happened; the young lady discovered that she wanted somebody else—and, well, that's all.

MAMIE

Oh yes. Of course, that's all.

JAMES

That is—it's all of that—all of that. Why, is

there, if one may ask, any—has there—has there—arrived any—is there anything——?

'MAMIE! IF IT ISN'T MAMIE!'

MAMIE

I don't know in the least what you mean, Mr.

Sevenoke, but—I should say—I believe—I rather imagine—that there is nothing.

JAMES (*takes her hand and presses it*)

Then this is, I do hope, the most providential, accidental, coincidental meeting that ever was known.

MAMIE (*shows him sketch-book*)

There—you see—is my old sketch-book. There is the hotel where we had to say good-bye—such a dismal good-bye—all through your wicked deception. As soon as we found out, of course, there was an end. Did you suppose that Eleanor was the girl to go angling for a coronet?

JAMES

Well, if that was all——

MAMIE

Well, but it wasn't all. If he really cares about her he would have come after her, lord or no lord.

JAMES

He couldn't. She gave him her address, but he tore it up when he learnt the news. You don't suppose that Ainslie was the kind of man to run after a millionairess?

MAMIE

Millionairess? Nell Ingress a millionairess?

JAMES

You told me so yourself.

MAMIE

Oh! so I did. I quite forgot it. So I did. But were you so stupid as to believe me?

JAMES

I don't believe everything, but I believed *you*.

MAMIE

Nelly a millionairess! Why, she teaches school—she's got a school here. She is coming to have tea with me directly. Oh, I was only joking! But, of course, a noble lord would not stoop to an American schoolmarm.

JAMES

Well, if you come to that, Ainslie is not a noble lord.

MAMIE

Not a lord? But you said he was.

JAMES

So I did. I quite forgot it. So I did. But I

didn't think you'd believe it. Of course, he isn't anything so disgraceful. I believe you think it disgraceful——

MAMIE

Mr. Sevenoke, there's been a very serious misunderstanding, and it's our faults—our two faults, mind. Only you and me to blame. How shall I ever forgive myself?

JAMES

Well, Mamie, just to punish me, you shall devote the short remainder of your days to making me understand the full heinousness of that fault. Lifelong repentance will be a lively thing to contemplate. [*Takes her hand.*

MAMIE

Not in the open hall, Mr. Sevenoke, if you please. But let me see—Nelly is coming here—why, here she is! (*Runs to meet her.*) Nell! Nell! guess who is here! Mr. Sevenoke—you remember Mr. Sevenoke, dear? Here he is! Why, we never thought to set eyes upon him again! Nelly, say you're glad to see him.

ELEANOR

How do you do, Mr. Sevenoke? I am very glad to meet you again. Is your friend Mr.—I mean Lord Carleon—quite well?

JAMES

Miss Ingress, there has been a great mistake —a very foolish thing it was—we have only just

'NOT IN THE OPEN HALL, MR. SEVENOKE, IF YOU PLEASE'

found it out. You thought Philip Ainslie was a peer. He isn't. He is plain Philip Ainslie, the son of a country clergyman—nothing more, believe

me, except Fellow and Lecturer at Christ's, Cambridge. I told Miss Elgood so, just to mystify her a little. I never dreamed of the mischief it would cause.

MAMIE

Yes, dear, and Mr. Ainslie thought you were a millionairess. It was my doing, dear, and I never thought of the mischief it would cause.

ELEANOR

Thought me an heiress—a millionairess? Oh! but how could he?

MAMIE

I told Mr. Sevenoke so. Oh! I never thought he would take it so seriously.

JAMES

Fortunately, here comes Philip himself. Say you forgive us, Miss Ingress.

[PHILIP *comes down surprised.*

ELEANOR

It seems, Mr. Ainslie, that we parted with some misunderstanding. I thought you were a peer.

MAMIE

Misunderstanding on both sides, Mr. Ainslie. You thought Eleanor was a millionaire.

PHILIP

I—well—I was told so.

'IF IT PLEASES MY LORD'

MAMIE

Well—she isn't, then. She's just a plain school teacher. Mr. Sevenoke—Jem—they call you Jem, you know—will you come and have tea?

[*They go up stage.*

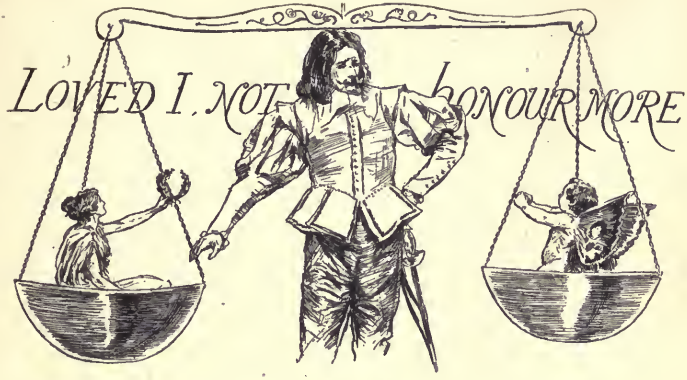
PHILIP (*after a pause, moves a step nearer.* ELEANOR *stands with folded hands and bowed head.* PHILIP *holds out his hand*)

Miss Ingress—Eleanor—shall we take up our conversation where we broke it off—heiress and millionairess of every best gift that the world has to offer?

ELEANOR

If it pleases my lord.

CURTAIN.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

HAROLD ANQUETIL (Dramatist. Owner of a ruined sugar estate in the island of Palmista) . .	Aged 25.
DR. WALFORD (General Practitioner)	Aged 45.
MR. THOMAS VIGORS (Financier)	Aged 36.
EDITH ALGAR (Harold Anquetil's *fiancée*, a nurse) .	Aged 22.
BOY MESSENGER.	

HAROLD *is dressed in a brown velveteen jacket, without waistcoat, silk scarf round waist, slippers. He is pale and weak.* EDITH *is dressed as a nurse, with long white apron.* DR. WALFORD *is in ordinary morning outdoor dress.* MR. THOMAS VIGORS *wears a profusion of jewelry and a fur overcoat.*

SCENE—*A poorly furnished room in a lodging-house on the second floor. An easy chair with pillow before the fire. A horse-hair sofa—a table with*

papers—a chiffonier with tea-pot and tea-cups upon it. A kettle on fire—an empty book-case. Two doors—a bedroom door and a door to the stairs. TIME—*Afternoon.*

EDITH (*tidying the room*)

My patient asleep at last, after his restless night. (*Opens door and looks in, leaving it open*). Yes, sleeping like an infant. He is certainly better, and so I shall soon have to tell him what I have done. Every single thing pawned: his clothes, his watch, his books—nothing left. What will he say when I do tell him? And—will it throw back his recovery? Or—will he indeed recover? It is a terrible thing to nurse your own lover. I would not trust him to strange hands—no—no—(*rises and walks about*); and yet—and yet—to sit by his bedside night and day; to watch the light of life flickering; to feel that any moment may extinguish it, and to keep all this pain and anxiety to oneself! If even now Harold should die! Harold! My Harold! Oh! no—no—no! And now there is no money, and I know not where to turn for more. Harold has no friends that I know of. Nobody can be more friendless than a colonist newly arrived in London. His estate produces nothing I know. Not one single friend has he in all London, except me. Well, he must go back to his native island

again. The Doctor says that the one chance is a return to that warm air of the West Indies.

'YES, SLEEPING LIKE AN INFANT'

Sound of steps outside, as on a carpetless stair. Knock at door. Enter DR. WALFORD.

DOCTOR

What a day! Snow and a black north-easter. How's your patient, nurse?

EDITH

He is asleep. He had a bad night. Now he has slept for five hours.

DOCTOR

Good. No return of fever? Good. (*Warms his hands at the fire.*) But, no doubt, still very weak?

EDITH

Yes.

DOCTOR

Well, you know what may happen. This cold weather is most unfortunate for him—most unfortunate. With warm, dry weather he might recover strength. As it is—(*shrugs his shoulders—warms his hands by the fire*)—as it is—— An interesting case.

EDITH

Yes: an interesting case.

DOCTOR

He is a man—to the medical man all other men are interesting—and he has got a disease which ought to be driven out. Therefore he is doubly interesting.

EDITH

Ought to be driven out?

DOCTOR

But there is only one way. He must be sent back instantly to his native place, where there is no winter. Why—what on earth are you crying about? Nurses don't cry over their patients.

EDITH

No—no—but you don't know, Doctor Walford. I have never told you. Harold is more than my patient. He is—my—lover. I am engaged to him.

DOCTOR

Oh! I see. Yes. Oh! Yes—yes. Ah!

EDITH

When he fell ill I could not leave him in strange hands. So I came—and you know the rest.

DOCTOR

You have nursed him night and day for six weeks. But for that he would have died.

EDITH

Oh! Doctor Walford—if he is to die after all!

DOCTOR

There is one chance for him. Take him on

board ship and carry him back to the West Indian sunshine.

EDITH

Oh! If I could—if I could.

DOCTOR

May I, without impertinence, learn something of the position of affairs with our patient?

EDITH

His estates have become worthless. They produce nothing. He is a poet and a dramatist—as yet—without success. When I came, there was some money—a few pounds. That is all gone, and I do not know if he has any left.

DOCTOR

All gone?

EDITH

And to-morrow a week's rent due.

DOCTOR

I have observed (*warms hands at fire*)—we general practitioners do notice things—a gradual disappearance of various objects—eh? (*Turns and waves hand around.*) There was a watch and chain on the dressing-table, a dressing case, a portmanteau, great coats and things hanging behind the

door, a case full of books. Where have those things gone?

EDITH

They are pawned. I had to find money for the daily necessaries.

DOCTOR

There was another gold watch and chain—and a ring or two.

EDITH

Mine are gone the same way. But that matters nothing—if only——(*sighs*).

DOCTOR

My dear young lady, all this is very serious. Is there no one who will lend you—or him—the money?

EDITH

No one. My own friends are in Australia. His are in his West Indian Island. There is no one to whom I can turn.

DOCTOR

It is serious—very serious. Let me look at you. What did you have for dinner to-day?

[HAROLD *opens bedroom door and stands listening.*

EDITH

Some bread and butter. There is no money.

DOCTOR

And yesterday?

EDITH

Oh! what does it matter? Bread and butter

'IT IS VERY—VERY SERIOUS. LET ME LOOK AT YOU'

DOCTOR

Always bread and butter! What are you going to do, then?

EDITH

I don't know. Perhaps Harold can get at some money.

DOCTOR

You don't know—you don't know! Are you going to starve, then? Pretty sort of nurse you are. But—stop—about this rent. If it is paid to-morrow you will be undisturbed for a week. That will allow time for developments. (*Aside*) If he remains another week in this cold, with insufficient nourishment, why that other week will settle him. (*Aloud*) Observe, Miss Algar, the G.P.—the man with the Red Lamp—never has any money to spare. Else he wouldn't be a G.P. But he can sometimes help. Just now, I remember, rather luckily, that the landlady down below owes me a trifle for medical attendance. I will speak to her as I go out. It will be all right about the rent.

EDITH

Oh, Doctor Walford, but you cannot keep your patients as well as cure them.

DOCTOR

Well, well, we won't talk of that; but now—stop a bit again—I remember, there was a little hamper came up from the country this morning—birds, sausages, eggs—country produce, in fact. They will be just the things to tempt your patient.

EDITH

But, Doctor Walford, this is too generous. How can we take these things?

DOCTOR

Yes, to be sure. Oh very natural. (*Warms his hand and talks into the fireplace.*) Ah! by the way, I've got in my cellar some port—in pints—just the thing for your patient.

EDITH

Oh!

DOCTOR

I'll send him some. Oh, I've got a huge cellar full. Well, that's all—feed him up—feed him up. That's all. But remember (HAROLD *is still listening at the open bedroom door*) the only chance that remains for him—a good chance it is; I'm sure it would give him a complete recovery—is to put him on board at once, and pack him off to his native island, where there is sunshine all day long. The only chance, mind.

EDITH

Is there no hope—else?

DOCTOR

None. Absolutely none. He may die in a day or two—or in a week—but in this cold air—die he must—and die he will unless you take him

to a warm climate. (HAROLD, *unseen, listens and nods his head.*) Give me my gloves. So—now I go out again on my tramp. Courage, Miss Algar, courage. He is young, and youth is life. Courage, courage! [*Exit.*

HAROLD (*at door*)

Edith!

EDITH (*jumps up with assumed cheerfulness*)

Harold! You are awake? You are out of bed? Come. (*She leads him to the easy chair.*) Now sit down and keep warm. (*She arranges the pillows for him.*) You are to take strengthening food and—and——

[HAROLD *looks strangely at her. She stops, confused, and turns her head.*

HAROLD

Edith, I was not asleep. I heard all that Doctor Walford said.

EDITH

All? You—heard—all?

HAROLD

All. Your devotion—and my doom.

EDITH

Oh! no—no—no—not your doom.

HAROLD

Yes—my doom. I am to go back to the West Indies. It is my only chance. Else I must die—in a week—in a month. It is my only chance. My dear—I cannot take that last and only chance. I must die.

SHE STOPS, CONFUSED, AND TURNS HER HEAD

EDITH

But it wants only a little money—just a little money.

HAROLD

I have no money. When I fell ill there were a

few pounds. We have spent them. You have pawned or sold the things. There is now nothing. I have nothing in the world but an estate that has gone to jungle, on which no one would advance a shilling.

EDITH

Harold! Nothing? No help anywhere?

HAROLD

No help anywhere. My poor Edith, it is sad for you—but—perhaps—you will forget me—after a while——

EDITH

Oh, Harold, you break my heart. How can I leave you? Let me stay with you . . . till—till the end. I will try to find some way to get money; there must be some way. If I could die for you, Harold! Oh, if I could die for you! Cannot Love help somehow? Is Love to be nothing but anguish?

HAROLD

No, dear; Love is not all anguish. Even at such a time as this, it is Love the Consoler. My dear, it makes me happy only to think that I shall live in your heart. Perhaps—who knows?—I shall take your love away with me. Let us think so. Let us speak of love while an hour remains of life.

Think only that you have made me happy in these last days.

EDITH

Harold! You must not—you cannot die!

HAROLD

Well, we will not talk of that. Meantime I must make my will. What have I got to give you? A bit of jungle land where there were once flourishing canefields, and a portfolio full of papers—the poems that nobody will publish, the play that nobody will produce. I give these precious treasures all to you, dear. You are my only reader.

EDITH

Harold!

HAROLD

And there they are—for you. When you read of love in them, remember that you were in my mind. When you read of fair women, remember that there was only one woman in the world for me. If you find anything that is good and true in them, remember that it was inspired by you. A poor gift, Edith, but it is—myself.

EDITH

Harold—you break my heart!

HAROLD (*laying portfolio on his knees and turning over leaves*)

They are all here—the 'Song of the Coral Reef,' the 'Song of the Flowering Cane,' the 'Song of the Trade Wind.' I thought to win fame and fortune by these songs. What fame! What

'UNKNOWN, UNREMEMBERED'

fortune! Well, everything is here except the play, and that is on its travels. You'll get it back before long, however. Fame and fortune! What a dream! And now I drop into the ocean of the past without a splash, without a ripple, unnoticed, unknown, unremembered. [*Closes portfolio.*

EDITH

Not unremembered, Harold.

HAROLD

Ah! (*Pause.*) Now we must be practical. I believe there is an institution somewhere called the Workhouse Infirmary. You must go there and arrange for my admission.

EDITH

Oh!

HAROLD

I must not live out the last few days on charity. Go, dear. There need be no shame—I feel none. I have got to lie down and die somewhere. Why not among the other wrecks and failures of the world? Go this very afternoon, Edith.

EDITH (*rises*)

Yes, Harold, if it must be so.

[*Puts on her bonnet and cloak.*

SERVANT *enters*

SERVANT

Please, there's a gentleman down below—name of Vigors—wants to see you.

EDITH

Vigors? Who is he?

HAROLD

Vigors? There was a man of that name at home. He kept a general store. Perhaps it is his son, Tom Vigors.

Enter VIGORS, *answering*

VIGORS

Yes, Tom Vigors—Tom. Always Tom to you, my dear fellow. Why—what is it? (*Looks round.*) (*Aside*) Ah! Very down on his luck. (*Aloud*) You don't look well. How are you? Quite well? (*Shakes hands with a great affectation of friendliness.*) Considering the news, I expected to find you jumping and dancing. What is it? Let us sit down and have a talk of old days. You don't look as if the news had pulled you together. Ah! the old days, when you used to gallop in on your pony to my father's office. What wonderful news, isn't it? Who would have thought it in the old days?

HAROLD

Yes, the old days. You at any rate seem prosperous. This looks like a change from the old days—from the days when——

VIGORS (*quickly*)

From the desk—yes.

ENTER VIGORS, ANSWERING

HAROLD

(*Aside*) And the white apron. (*Aloud*) The desk—yes. As for myself, you see I am ill. And I am not—prosperous.

VIGORS

Not prosperous? Why, what would you have? Well—never mind old days. Let's begin with the new days. Of course, you guess what I have come about?

HAROLD

You will tell me. Sit down. Don't go, Edith.

VIGORS

Thankye, I'd rather stand. I mean business. Quite simple business. Directly I saw it in the paper yesterday (*pulling out paper, which he hands to* HAROLD)—but of course you have seen it. (HAROLD *opens paper, reads without showing the least sign of astonishment and lays it on table.*) Yes—you saw it yesterday, of course—and you've had twenty-four hours to turn it over.

HAROLD

Go on!

VIGORS

Have you formed any plan of action? If so, I'm your man to carry it out. No plan?

HAROLD

No.

VIGORS

Then listen to my plan. I got your address

from your lawyers, who told me that you were pretty low down.

HAROLD

Low down?

VIGORS

I said: 'Now is the time for an old friend, a true friend. Strike while the iron's hot. Strike for your old friend, Tom. Strike at once,' I said. 'All the more if he is down on his luck.' That's what I said.

HAROLD (*repeats*)

Strike at once, 'Tom,' at once.

VIGORS

There's nothing sentimental about Tom Vigors. But where an old friend is concerned—why then you see ——

HAROLD

Then you have a plan.

EDITH (*takes up paper and reads it*)

'Gold in Palmist Island! Rich veins of gold—great nuggets found.' Why! on your island, Harold? 'Rush of people—formation of companies. Enormous rise in the value of estates.' Harold! Oh! have you read it? Have you seen it?

HAROLD (*quietly*)

I have just read it, Edith. Mr. Vigors comes to tell me about it.

VIGORS (*aside*)

He knew nothing about it! Fool! Ass! Thickhead! I might have got the estate for a song!

EDITH

Then you are rich, Harold, and we need not—— Oh!

[*Takes off her bonnet and cloak, and lays them down.*

HAROLD

It appears, Edith, that there is gold on the island.

VIGORS

Gold! Well, yes, so much gold that they are flocking to the place from every quarter. Gold! There just is gold. Now don't interrupt for ten minutes. This is my plan. You can't work a gold mine. I can't work a gold mine. You can't find those who will. I *can* find those who will. So we shall all stand in together, you and I, and the man who will run the show. That's fair, isn't it? Why, of course it is. They've begun, already, to buy up the estates. Very good. Now I shall give you £40,000, do you hear?—£40,000 (*brings out pocket-*

book and gold pencil-case) for your estate. I have just come from the City, and I've seen my man. £40,000 down, as soon as the title deeds are in my hands.

EDITH (*snatches* HAROLD'S *hand*)

Forty thousand pounds! Oh! It is a miracle!

HAROLD (*quietly*)

Go on. Please go on.

VIGORS

I am quite fair and straight with you. Honest Tom always. You remember. Honest Tom. Everything is in your interest. (*More play of pocket-book and gold pencil-case.*) I shall transfer the estate to my name for £80,000. You can't do without me; I can't do without you. So we share alike. That's fair, isn't it?

HAROLD (*coldly*)

Go on, if you please.

VIGORS

Then my man, who is behind me all the time, forms a company with a capital of £150,000, fully paid up—£1 shares—to catch the multitude. Now do you see?

HAROLD

Not quite. But pray go on.

VIGORS

Why, you get £40,000 for an estate gone back to jungle, and I get £40,000 for my share in the job, and my man gets £70,000. So, you see, we can't do without each other, and so we all share.

'FORTY THOUSAND POUNDS! OH! IT IS A MIRACLE'

HAROLD

All, yes, and—the shareholders?

VIGORS

Oh! the shareholders! Well, shareholders are

generally people who think they can get thirty per cent. instead of three—and there you are, there you are.

HAROLD

Yet there is a rush, you say.

VIGORS

At first. It's this way. When you've paid the directors and the secretary and the office expenses at home, and the engineers out there, and the labour expenses, it will turn out that the gold costs more to dig up than it can fetch to pay any dividend. So—in fact—well, you see, you see.

HAROLD

I *do* see—Honest Tom! Always Honest Tom!

VIGORS

Hallo! Why, what's your caper? If it wasn't for the blessed Juggins who lives in the country, and believes everything that's printed in the prospectus, why, where are your company promoters?

HAROLD

Where, indeed? This, then, is what is called business in the City?

VIGORS

Of course it is. And very good business too.

HAROLD

What do you think of it, Edith ?

EDITH

Oh! Harold, it's like a dream. All this money flowing in—just now. It's like a dream.

HAROLD

Like a nightmare, rather. Come, Mr. Vigors, let me explain your scheme as I see it.

VIGORS

Well, show me that you do see it. We can't pay up, you know, till the conveyance is effected. But something down—say a hundred or two—or —not to haggle with an old friend——

HAROLD

There will be no occasion for haggling. This is how the matter strikes me, who am not a business man. You propose to me that for the consideration of £40,000 I should join you in a conspiracy for the ruin of a great many ignorant and credulous persons, whom you will entice to their destruction by a flaring prospectus. It is a conspiracy for wholesale robbery.

VIGORS

Robbery ? Robbery ?—really—Mr. Anquetil

—we never use that word in the City. We offer shares—that is all. And this is plain biz, good biz.

HAROLD

Really. Plain business?

VIGORS

You are a poor man—that's staring me in the face. You are weak and ill—you want things. I offer you £40,000. You have got nothing in the world to do for it but sign a conveyance of your estate as soon as the document is ready. Meantime you shall have whatever you want in advance.

HAROLD

I am a *very* poor man, Mr. Vigors. Your discernment is not at fault. I am on the verge of destitution. I am at the very gates of death. Perhaps because these portals are opening for me I see somewhat more clearly than you the nature of the transaction which you propose, and I decline.

EDITH

Harold! Your life depends upon it. Oh! Harold—and mine.

VIGORS

Don't be a fool. But of course you won't be, when you reflect a little.

HAROLD

I have reflected.

VIGORS

Come, Mr. Anquetil, no one would believe such a thing of you. Come now, look here, your ancestors had no compunction in driving hundreds of slaves.

HAROLD

No?

VIGORS

They got rich, they did, by their slaves' labour; why shouldn't you get rich by the ignorance and greed of the world?

HAROLD

Ah! why not?

VIGORS

It serves these people right: they want to get money without working for it: they want to get the niggers to work for them in the mines.

HAROLD

The niggers. Yes.

VIGORS

Well, what do we do? We find 'em the niggers and we find 'em the mine, and if the mine don't pay after all, why, we've done our part and we've got our part.

HAROLD

Say our plunder. Your City view is not mine.

VIGORS

What! Not yours? Don't see it? But, do you mean to throw away this chance? Make me a proposal—only a proposal. Find some other way, man. It is a fortune to throw away.

HAROLD

Say no more. I will have no hand in this iniquity.

VIGORS

If you won't play, I can't. Mr. Anquetil (*changing his tone*), remember—we belong to the same island. Oh! I know. Your father was a rich man and proud of his descent, and mine kept the general store, and was a ship's steward to begin with. But we do belong to the same place—remember that—and I'm really a very poor man. These fine furs and things—I wear 'em to make people think I am rich. It is my only chance. I shall never get another.

HAROLD

No.

VIGORS

You must agree. Come, I will give you fifty thousand pounds—sixty thousand pounds—for

your share. The estate is right plumb centre in the middle of the gold ; we can get the two estates on either side—but without yours the company can't be floated. Oh! You *must* consider me.

'I AM SORRY FOR YOU. BUT—NO'

HAROLD

I am sorry for you. But—I don't see my way.

VIGORS

Young lady—persuade him. It is for his advantage.

EDITH

Harold, it is for your life.

HAROLD

No, Mr. Vigors, I shall probably be done with in a week or two. You can then make the same proposal to this young lady, who will be my heiress.

VIGORS

In a week? (*Looks at him doubtfully. Aside*) Humph! If one was sure we could wait a week or a month before the run begins to slacken. (*Looks carefully at* EDITH.) Perhaps the girl won't be such a fool. (*Aloud*) My dear friend, you must not talk that way. Of course you will get well. Let me be your banker meanwhile. And you will think over the scheme—this brilliant scheme.

HAROLD

To ruin the widows and the helpless? Oh! yes. I will think it over.

VIGORS

Fifty thousand——

HAROLD

Had I fifty thousand lives to lose, they should all go rather than I would join you in this.

VIGORS

Fifty thousand lives! Well—I will call again in two or three days and see. After a little reflection you may come down from your heroics. For the moment, good-bye—and I wish you a return to common-sense. [*Exit.*

HAROLD (*leans head on hand—silence for a minute. Looks up*)

Is he gone, Edith?

EDITH

Oh, Harold. Is it impossible?

HAROLD

Quite impossible. Forget it, Edith. We are just as we were—that is all. Forget that fellow with his tricks and conspiracies.

EDITH

Oh! It is too cruel. Think again, Harold! It is your life, my dear—your life—and mine. How can I live without you? And there is no other way.

HAROLD

No other way. Yet not this way. My dear—my love—in the years to come, when I have long been laid in an obscure grave, remembered by none but you, it will be a happiness for you to think that your lover would not sell his honour even to save his life. No, dear; not even to save your dear self from grief.

I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more.

EDITH

No, dear, you could not. Yet—yet—oh, it is so cruel—so cruel! [*Sinks upon his shoulder.*

HAROLD

Come, dear—what were we doing? I remember. You were going off to the infirmary. Well—we are just where we were. Put on your bonnet. It is not quite the ideal end—a bed in a workhouse infirmary, but these things move me not. Go, dear.

EDITH (*rises and puts on her bonnet and cloak—hesitates. Then leans over his chair*)

Harold! I am unworthy of you. I never knew till now how much unworthy. Forgive me.

Yes—I will go—I will go at once—to—to—the Workhouse Infirmary.

[*Noise below—trampling of feet.*

BOY (*outside*)

No, I won't leave it ; I've got to give it to the gentleman myself and to wait for an answer. (*Noise of steps on stairs.* BOY *opens door.*) Mr. Harold Anquetil ?

EDITH

Yes. What is it ?

BOY

From the Prince Theatre Royal. Wait for an answer. Immediate, please.

EDITH

It is a letter, Harold, from the Prince Theatre Royal.

HAROLD

I suppose they are sending back the play. Yes, read it, Edith.

EDITH

There is no parcel with it. It is only a note.

[*Reads.*

'Dear Sir,—I have read your play and am greatly struck by the situations and the dialogue. I propose, as soon as we have agreed upon terms,

to put it in rehearsal, and to announce it as following the present piece—perhaps in six weeks. I should like to see you as soon as possible. There are certain slight changes which I would suggest. Can you come here this afternoon?

'Very faithfully yours,

'KEMBLE CARLYON.'

'IT IS ONLY A NOTE'

EDITH

Harold!

HAROLD

You can take off your bonnet and cloak, Edith. So, now sit down and write a note. Tell Mr. Carlyon that I cannot get out of doors just now. He will come here.

[EDITH *writes quickly. Gives note to the* BOY, *who runs off.*

'LOVED WE NOT HONOUR MORE!'

EDITH *turns to* HAROLD. *He holds out his arms. She bends over and kisses him.*

HAROLD

Edith, the accursed gold shall lie under the accursed jungle that hides it. As for me, my life is saved. I know that my life is saved. It would have been lost—'Loved we not honour more!

CURTAIN

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

GEOFFREY ARMIGER HORACE CATERHAM	EMMELINE DE LISLE CLARINE DE LISLE KATIE DE LISLE	} Elder Sisters

PLACE—A London Drawing-room. TIME—The Present.

ACT I

(*The Day after the Ball*)

SCENE—*A London Drawing-room.* KATIE *standing at the window, looking out.* EMMELINE *at piano, playing.* CLARINE *flower painting at table. It is winter, and a fire is burning.*

KATIE

Oh! How flat, and dull, and stupid, everything is after the dance. (*Drums on window with fingers.*) If only something would happen!

[*Walks about restlessly.*

CLARINE

Things are always dull the morning after a dance. What do you want to happen?

KATIE

Last night I was exactly like Cinderella. I had no ball-dress—I could not go—and at the very last moment, Auntie arrived with a beautiful dress —made me put it on—took me in her carriage, and then—— [*Clasps her hands.*

CLARINE

And then, as you justly observe, you did not dance furiously; you sat out more than once; with a certain Mr. Armiger, was it not?

KATIE

His name is Geoffrey.

CLARINE

Oh! You know his Christian name?

EMMELINE (*looking up*)

This was the waltz I liked the best.

[*Plays a few lines*

'THIS WAS THE WALTZ I LIKED THE BEST

KATIE

Mr. Armiger dances beautifully. His step suited mine perfectly.

EMMELINE

It is a pretty waltz. Here is another.

[*Plays a few more lines.*

CLARINE

Who is Mr. Armiger, Katie? He's quite young. What is he?

KATIE

Quite young? Oh! No. Why he is already twenty-one. He is an undergraduate at Cambridge. You can't call that quite young. But he is going to be a great man.

CLARINE

Ah! He gave you that information himself?

KATIE

He did—he knows what he can do. I don't know yet whether he is to be a poet, or a dramatist, or a statesman; but he will be something great. Oh! yes. Of that there is no doubt.

EMMELINE (*from the piano*)

Horace knows him, Clarine. He is Mr. Geoffrey Armiger, son of the Vicar of something, and first cousin to Sir Roland Armiger. He is quite poor, and has got his own way to make. If I were

you, Katie, I should wait till he had made a little of that way before I thought too much about him.

KATIE

Oh! You think of it in that light; I don't. Now, I am quite sure that he will most certainly win his own way. I adore success—and he will attain success. Oh! it is such a splendid thing to be a man, just because every man can make himself a Prince and King if he likes.

EMMELINE

You are a dear little enthusiast. (*Jumps up from piano.*) And a simpleton, and a goose. (*Kisses her.*) She shall have her Prince to think about —so she shall. Clarey, Horace said he would look in at five o'clock this afternoon.

Enter SERVANT

SERVANT (*announces*)

Mr. Caterham. Mr. Geoffrey Armiger.

Enter CATERHAM *and* ARMIGER

HORACE

Hope you are not too tired after last night.

EMMELINE

Not a bit, thanks. It was a really good evening.

GEOFFREY (*to* KATIE)

I need not ask if you are too tired. Your looks anticipate the question.

KATIE

I am not in the least tired, Mr. Armiger.

GEOFFREY

I do not think I have ever enjoyed a dance so much.

KATIE

I am sure—but, you see, it was my first dance.

GEOFFREY

I am afraid you must have thought some of my talk somewhat—what shall I say—conceited?

KATIE

Not at all. Conceit is one thing, and not an agreeable thing. Ambition is another.

GEOFFREY

'By that sin fell the angels'—yet what is youth without ambition?

KATIE

Like a lame old man without crutches. Have you decided the particular form of your ambition? Last night you were, if I remember rightly, divided between literature and law, or was it——

GEOFFREY

It is not kind of you to remind me so keenly of foolish sayings, but, as a matter of fact, it was not law. It was——

KATIE

Of course, I remember now. It was statesmanship.

GEOFFREY

Yes, I shall be a Cabinet Minister!

KATIE

Glorious! But oh! how difficult!

GEOFFREY

Is there anything worth attaining that is not difficult? Who, without endeavour, can win a place among great men?

KATIE

Yes, you must work.

GEOFFREY

Who would not for such a prize?

[*They go up stage.*

EMMELINE *and* HORACE *come down.* CLARINE *takes her place at piano.*

EMMELINE

He looks a nice boy, Horace. Perhaps he really may turn out very well.

HORACE

That's as may be, but certainly he's a nice boy, and if his cousin were to go off, he would be a rich boy as well.

EMMELINE

Katie seems to like him.

HORACE

Why not? It may be a boy and girl fancy, or it may be more serious. He begged me to bring him here. You don't mind, Emmeline?

[*They walk up stage.*

GEOFFREY *and* KATIE *come down.* CLARINE *goes on playing dance music softly.*

KATIE

And you are going back to Cambridge to-morrow?

GEOFFREY

Yes—to-morrow. I shall take back a very happy memory. May I call again when I come back to London?

KATIE

If you will tell me all about your plans for your future career.

GEOFFREY

If I feel that you take an interest in my striving plans.

KATIE

One is always interested in clever men's ambitions.

GEOFFREY

You talk as if you knew many clever and ambitious men.

KATIE

I don't know any—except you, Mr. Armiger.

GEOFFREY

It remains to be proved whether my abilities are equal to my ambition.

KATIE

Oh! Yes, yes! You must believe that—let me believe it. Oh! Mr. Armiger, what happiness

to be always getting higher and higher with all the world looking on.

GEOFFREY

I want no eyes except your own.

KATIE

Always growing wiser and always doing great things for your country. Oh! (*clasps her hands*). It is so noble! It is so great!

GEOFFREY

You will look on?

KATIE

Always! always!

Enter SERVANT *with parcel. He gives it to* EMMELINE, *who reads the address.*

EMMELINE

To the Miss de Lisles. What a curious address! Here is something for all three of us.

[*They all look at it—gather round—form group.*

CLARINE

A brown paper parcel! Let us open it.

EMMELINE (*opens it. Takes out a white satin or kid slipper*)

For the Miss de Lisles. This is unheard of. One slipper cannot be for all of us.

CLARINE

Oh! I have it. It is Cinderella over again.

PUTS ON SLIPPER WITH EASE

The slipper is for the one whom it fits.

[*They all gather round and pass the slipper about, looking at it curiously and laughing.*

CLARINE

Emmeline, you are the elder of the two elder

daughters. They were bad-tempered, I believe, and ugly. Try, dear elder daughter.

HORACE (*sets chair*)

Now, Emmeline. I am quite sure beforehand that it will not fit you.

EMMELINE (*takes off shoe and sits down.* GEOFFREY *brings footstool and places it before the chair. Then he presents the slipper, kneeling on one foot. She tries vigorously*)

No. It is no use. I cannot get my foot into the slipper. You try next, dear second elder daughter.

CLARINE (*same business*)

No, it's no use. I can't get my foot into the slipper. Now, Katie, it is your turn.

KATIE (*sits down, and places her foot for the slipper.* GEOFFREY *on one knee presents the slipper. It goes on easily.* KATIE *stands up and shows the slipper on her foot—she laughs and blushes*)

It is mine. I wonder who sent it.

[*Glances at* GEOFFREY, *who turns his head. They all look at him.*

GEOFFREY

An odd idea, indeed. I—I—fear I must be

going. Good-bye. I shall remember last night and all that you have said. [*Exit.*

HORACE (*looking after him*)

He still possesses the attribute of modesty. Katie, it is a pretty slipper.

KATIE

I shall keep it—to remind me of my first ball—and——

EMMELINE

And—and of what, dear child?

KATIE

Of the Prince to be!

CURTAIN

ACT II

(*Four years later.*)

SCENE—*The same.* EMMELINE *and* CLARINE *are now married.* KATIE *lives on in the same house.*

EMMELINE (*in walking dress, waiting*)

My husband promised to be here by five. It is now a quarter past. The fickleness of woman is nothing to the unpunctuality of man. (*Goes to table, turns over things.*) Katie is not fickle, but she is very untidy. Always leaving things about: what is this? Why, like Mr. Wegg, she has dropped into poetry. (*Reads aloud.*)

Oh! tell me, willow wren and whitethroat, beating
The sluggish breeze with eager homeward wing,
Bear you no message for me—not a greeting
From him you left behind—my Prince and King?

You come from far—from south, and east and west:
Somewhere you left him, daring some great thing:
I know not what, save that it is the best:
Somewhere you saw him—saw my Prince and King!

You cannot choose but know him : by the crown
They place upon his head—the crown and ring :
And by the loud and many voiced renown,
After the footsteps of my Prince and King.

He speaks ; and lo ! the listening world obeys :
He leads, and all men follow ; and they cling
And hang around the words, and works, and ways
As of a prophet—of my Prince, my King.

Her Prince and King ! Well, if she's really waiting for that I begin to understand why she refuses everybody. As if she could expect a man to be made on purpose for her ! Her Prince and King ! How curious a fancy ! [*Lays down verses.*

Enter HORACE CATERHAM *and* GEOFFREY ARMIGER.

HORACE

Sorry to keep you waiting, dear. I was engaged with Armiger on some legal work. You know my wife, Geoffrey ?

GEOFFREY (*looks a little puzzled*)

I think I have had the pleasure of seeing Mrs Caterham before.

EMMELINE

I think you came here once with my husband. It was some time ago, Sir Geoffrey.

READS ALOUD

HORACE

Of course. Why, Geoffrey, there was a dance, and you fell half in love with my wife's sister, who was little more than a child then. Now she's a woman, and—well, perhaps you'll see for yourself. Don't you remember the slipper business?

GEOFFREY

Yes, yes. It all comes back to me—all.

EMMELINE

I believe you sent the slipper, Sir Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY

I believe I did. How is your sister, Mrs. Caterham?

EMMELINE

She is quite well, thank you. She lives here in the old house where our people have lived for two hundred years—and she writes poetry.

GEOFFREY

Poetry? I can well imagine that.

EMMELINE

Here are some verses which I found on her

table just now. She is always dreaming about some one whom she calls her Prince—who is going to do something wonderful.

HORACE

Katie has reached the age of twenty-one, and she still believes in the man who is going to do something wonderful.

GEOFFREY

A robust faith. May I read the verses, Mrs. Caterham? (*She bows assent, and he takes them and reads three verses aloud. Then he breaks off, remembering.*) 'Prince and King!' 'Many voiced renown!' Ah! what has come of it?

EMMELINE

Come of what, Sir Geoffrey?

GEOFFREY

Oh! I beg your pardon. I was thinking of something else—something forgotten. Forgive me.

EMMELINE

I will on one condition, that you dine with us to-night ——

HORACE

Yes—do, old chap; and look here, Emmeline and I have to go out now—duty visits—but—Ah! there's Katie's knock at the door—I know it. Wait a few minutes, and she'll come in and give you some tea. Till to-night.

GEOFFREY

Till to-night, then.

[*Exeunt* HORACE *and* EMMELINE.

GEOFFREY (*takes up verses again*)

Somewhere you left him, daring some great thing:
I know not what, save that it is the best:
Somewhere you saw him—saw my Prince and King!

I remember it all: the sweet and eager face of the girl, and my silly talk about greatness. I was to be a Poet—or a Statesman—which? I forget. Poet? Statesman? And what am I? Pleasure-hunter. I live to enjoy the fruits of the earth. Pleasure-hunter. It is not a glorious profession. Four years ago I should have scorned it. Now—it seems as if there was nothing more possible for me. What is a rich man to do? I wonder if she thinks—No! That was impossible. Yet I told her that when I had done something great—

Heavens! what a fool I was!—I would return and tell her.

You cannot choose but know him: by the crown
They place upon his head.

I can't get the words out of my head—'My Prince and King.' I am a pretty sort of King: mine would be a pretty sort of crown. Yet four years ago I could think in that way—and talk in that way, too.

KATIE (*outside*)

Very well. I will write to her.

Enter KATIE

GEOFFREY

Miss de Lisle. I see you do not remember me.

KATIE

Oh! yes; and am so glad to see you again.

GEOFFREY

You are kindness itself; but I see that if you have some memory of my face, you have forgotten my name. I am Geoffrey Armiger. I had the honour of making your acquaintance four years ago at a ball—your first ball—and was allowed to call the next day.

KATIE

Of course I remember. *Now* you are *Sir* Geoffrey Armiger.

GEOFFREY

Yes. I came into my cousin's title.

KATIE

Ah! Yes. You have done nothing to win that title.

GEOFFREY

It is mine by inheritance.

KATIE

Have you done anything—since—to deserve that title?

GEOFFREY

One does not deserve a title. One inherits it.

KATIE

Yes. Inherited honours mean inherited responsibility. But of course you are working. You have ambitions.

GEOFFREY

I fear that I am not—what you would call—working.

KATIE

I remember when we met four years ago—you had great ambitions—even very great ambitions.

GEOFFREY

I believe—I know—I had.

KATIE

And what have you done with them?

GEOFFREY

I have dropped them.

KATIE

What, then, have you done, then, since I saw you last?

GEOFFREY

Nothing much, I fear. Followed the occupation—or the pursuit—or the profession of pleasure.

KATIE

It sounds a poor sort of profession—for a man's profession.

GEOFFREY

Terribly poor, isn't it? Wears one out, you see, with nothing to show for it.

KATIE

Do you mean that you have thrown away all those fine ambitions and resolutions?

GEOFFREY

Every mortal one of them. The young man who amused you with his dreams is dead—dead and buried, I believe.

KATIE

What? Have you really resolved to bury all those dreams that seemed so beautiful to me?

GEOFFREY

Did they? Did they really? Perhaps it may yet be not too late to make them live again.

KATIE

Make them live! It would be a great thing. But I fear they were only dreams. I shall never have such dreams again.

GEOFFREY (*takes up paper of verses*)

Was it a dream about a Prince and King?

KATIE

Yes. But you could not understand it any more—now—even if you were to try. You had better go, Sir Geoffrey. There is Pleasure waiting outside for you with a bottle of champagne.

GEOFFREY

Yes.

KATIE

And a pack of cards, I believe. I wouldn't wait any longer, if I were you.

GEOFFREY (*takes his hat*)

No. I think I have no business here.

KATIE

Don't you feel lonely without your ambitions?

GEOFFREY

I never feel anything. I never want anything.

KATIE

You just order everything—you can order even success.

GEOFFREY

I don't want success. Whatever I want I buy.

KATIE

Honour. Achievement. Reputation.

GEOFFREY

Yes. And love and happiness. Oh! it is wonderful what money will do.

KATIE

I congratulate you. Now, Sir Geoffrey, since you have become a complete stranger to me, and not the Sir Geoffrey I knew four years ago, is it not time?—— [*Points to door.*

GEOFFREY (*lays down his hat again*)

Miss de Lisle, do you remember a certain slipper—a white satin slipper?

KATIE

Yes.

GEOFFREY

Have you by any accident kept that slipper?

KATIE

Yes. I have kept it because it reminded me of certain things—of hope—of courage—of possibilities. It is in this cabinet. (*Opens drawer, takes out slipper in silver paper.*) See how tarnished and faded it is. The silver buckle is black and the leather has shrunk.

GEOFFREY

No—let me look. No—it hasn't altered. [*Takes it.*

KATIE (*takes it back*).

It has altered. It has shrunk. You don't

know this kind of slipper. It is like the piece of shagreen in Balzac's story. It goes on shrinking as the original owner goes down hill. You were the original owner.

'SEE HOW TARNISHED AND FADED IT IS'

GEOFFREY

Do you think you could put it on again?

KATIE

No, I am sure I couldn't. But I will try. (*Sits down; tries.*) No, you see, it won't go on.

GEOFFREY

Perhaps, with a little patience—a little good-will—a little coaxing.

KATIE

No.

GEOFFREY

Give me the slipper. Yes. I really think it has shrunk. It is a slipper bewitched. Miss de Lisle—Katie—do you think if one were to climb up the hill again that slipper would go back to its proper size?

KATIE

You cannot climb up the hill again. I wish you could. Give me back the slipper.

GEOFFREY

If I were to keep it?

KATIE

No, you shall not keep it. Pleasure is waiting for you with the champagne and the cards, and the love that you can buy. Go back to Pleasure.

GEOFFREY

Your sister gave me these lines. And I remembered suddenly—the young man who, perhaps, after all, is *not* dead. I think, if I could, I should like to take up those ambitions once more. Do you think I could?

KATIE

It would be far, far harder now than it was four years ago. You have got to recover the noble mind, the unsullied heart. Can you hope to do that?

GEOFFREY

Perhaps.

KATIE

You have fallen. Are you strong enough to rise?

GEOFFREY

I don't know. If that slipper should enlarge again——

KATIE

Oh! How can a man say *if* when he ought to say *shall*?

GEOFFREY

It *shall*, then. I swear it shall.

KATIE

'Swear not by the moon,' but when that happens you may come again.

GEOFFREY

I will.

[*Takes her hand. Goes. Stops in the doorway to look round.*

KATIE (*recites the last verse of her poem*)

He speaks ; and lo ! the listening world obeys :
He leads, and all men follow ; and they cling
And hang around the words, and works, and ways,
As of a prophet—of my Prince and King.

GEOFFREY (*returns swiftly*)

Katie ! Let me come again before that happens. Not your Prince and King. That may never be—but for ever your servant and your scholar !

[*Takes her hand and, kneeling upon one knee, kisses it.*

CURTAIN

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

HUGH VALENTINE, Cavalier Colonel in love with Lady Beatrice.
JOHN TOMLINSON, Roundhead Colonel in love with Lady Beatrice.
VAUGHAN, Serving Man.
LADY BEATRICE GRAHAM, aged 21. Father killed at Worcester.
NELL, Lady Beatrice's Waiting Woman. Father killed at Worcester. Almost same age as her mistress.

TIME—May 1660.
PLACE—Lady Beatrice Graham's house in the Country.

SCENE—*Hall of the house. If the space is very limited, call it Lady Beatrice Graham's boudoir. Not too much furniture. Portrait on the wall of a Cavalier.*

NELL *discovered at work: sewing a silk dress at a table. Dress of the period for servants, neat and sober, white cap, white kerchief over her neck and shoulders.*

NELL (*looking up*)

There's more trouble! Always more trouble! Ay! and always will be till the King comes back. As my lady is so fond of singing,

'Then look for no peace, for the war shall never cease,
Till the King shall come to his own again.'

Yes, always more trouble. And my lady always in the thick of it. One of these fine days she'll be carried off to prison for treason. What a comfort it is to be a humble maid instead of a great lady!

Enter LADY BEATRICE *with a letter in her hand.*

LADY B.

Nell! Nell! I have had news. Oh! great news! Glorious news!

NELL (*looks up interrogatively*)

Yes, my lady?

LADY B.

Nell! You are a faithful girl--a discreet girl—you are a sweet girl. In other words, you are a phœnix of maids. And, like me, Nell, you have memories to keep you faithful. Your father was well stricken in years when he went out to die beside my own father; and I was a young girl of ten when they went forth together to die on the

field of Worcester. I remember them riding away. Your father, a brave man and a loyal, rode last as if to protect the others.

NELL

I remember, my lady.

LADY B.

And my brother rode in the same troop. Saw one ever a more gallant lad of eighteen?

NELL

Yes, my lady, I remember well. Father was on in years, but he could strike a blow still. He used to swear a little, but he did his duty; and he drank a little; but mother always said that all was right with any man who died as father died.

LADY B. (*laying hand on* NELL'S *shoulder*)

Your mother is a brave woman, Nell. What can a man do better than to die for the right? Ay, that wipes out all. But listen, Nell; listen. Is there no one about?

NELL

No one, my lady.

LADY B.

This letter—this letter comes from Holland—from my brother Mercia, who is with the King.

Listen. 'The times,' he says, 'are almost ripe. Noll gone to his own place—' he means the Devil, the Earl always means well—'the new man with no hold of the people, who have no fear of him nor no love of him'—indeed that is true.

NELL

Yes, my lady.

LADY B.

You see, Nell, how well they understand things at the Hague. 'Tis a strange place enough for the King's Court, to be sure.

NELL

Yes, my lady. Where is the Hague?

LADY B.

In the Low Countries; but back to our letter—'I must not speak out too freely in a letter; but, my dear, I will say this: Expect thy King in his own Palace at Whitehall before many weeks, and thy brother back to his own house as soon as crop ears are turned out. Our messengers are up and down the country heartening the people.'

NELL

That they are, my lady.

LADY B.

''Tis a dangerous duty, and they who undertake it carry their lives in their hands. The messenger

who brings thee this may be trusted. But be careful in whose presence you speak to him. I will not tell thee his name.'

NELL

Not tell his name, my lady?

LADY B.

'That is a surprise for thee. I have told his Majesty what I have said. He bade me add these words: "Tell thy sweetheart sister, Tom, that I will kiss her at Whitehall before all the Court."' Nell, 'tis a gallant prince! 'Certainly, dear sister, none ever knew the King to break his word in such a promise as that. Wherefore be of good heart, forget the past, and look forward stedfastly and stoutly to the time when the King shall come to his own again.' Yes, Nell, yes—(*Sings the refrain*)

'Then look for no peace, for the war shall never cease
Till the King shall come to his own again.'

Oh! the old words. They ring in my brain. . . . It is like the morning when they rode away, Nell! (*Catches maid by the hand.*) Yes, we can both remember that day . . . they rode away—they rode away . . . to die—two of them to die and the other to live in exile. My brother's life was saved by his friend Hugh Valentine, whom he loves so much. I would I could see that same Hugh Valentine.

Well, we would send them again to-day on the same errand if need were—to die—to die—for the King —for the King! (*Sinks down and buries her face in her hands. Springs to her feet again and sings again*)

'Then look for no peace, for the war shall never cease
Till the King shall come to his own again.'

NELL

Nay, mistress, be calm. Should Colonel Tomlinson hear!

LADY B.

His ears are tingling, and so they may!

NELL

Should the servants hear!

LADY B.

Let them hear! They will all join in the refrain—

'Look for no peace, for the war shall never cease
Till the King shall come to his own again.'

NELL

The people are not all to be trusted, my lady. But yesterday I met that sour old saint, Win-the-Fight Sludge, the Sexton; he was muttering as he walked along. When he saw me, he lifted up his

head and said, 'Go tell your mistress there's men to fight now as there were men to fight then. Another Worcester field shall send them flying again.' There had been drinking of the King's health at the tavern.

LADY B.

Let him talk. We will continue him, when we have all come back, to dig the graves. It suits his mood. But, Nell, where is the messenger? Who brought this letter? My brother said it would be a surprise. Go, look upon him. Give him food and drink.

NELL

He is on the terrace, my lady. (*Goes out—returns.*) Madam, it is a gentleman.

LADY B.

A gentleman? A gentleman? Then—then—it must be one of the messengers of whom my brother speaks. Go, bring him here. (*Exit* NELL.) Oh! if it can be true! If I shall see the King—and my brother banished for nine long years—and perhaps the gallant Colonel Valentine who saved my brother's life and is my brother's dearest friend!

Enter COLONEL VALENTINE. NELL *waits with folded hands at the door.*

VALENTINE (*bowing low*)

Lady Beatrice?

LADY B.

Pray be welcome, Sir. You come from the Hague recently?

HE RAISES HER HAND AND KISSES IT

VALENTINE

Quite recently, Madam, as the letter which I brought with me has doubtless told you.

LADY B. (*looking at him curiously*)

My brother is well?

VALENTINE

He is quite well, and hopeful.

LADY B.

And—and—he said that I should receive a surprise. Sir, there is a gallant gentleman about the King of whom I would fain ask news. He is a gentleman whom I have only seen once, when I was a little girl; but he saved my brother's life, being a very valiant gentleman, and he is my brother's dearest friend, and—I should like to ask about him, or, better still, to have speech with him; and I think that you are none other than that valiant gentleman, Hugh Valentine.

VALENTINE

Madam, I am Hugh Valentine.

LADY B.

Then, Sir, I thank you. Can I say more? There are no words that can say more. (*Offers her hand. He takes off his glove, throws it on the table and kneels to kiss her hand.*) Sir, it is now nine years since you dragged my poor brother off the field. Oh! Colonel Valentine, what can I say?—where find words of gratitude? Oh! loyal

friend and brave soldier! In my brother's name you are welcome here. For his dear sake all that this poor house contains is yours.

VALENTINE

Nay, Madam. Best to say nothing, believe me; all that is old history. Shall I tell you about your brother?

LADY B.

Why did he not tell me who was the bearer? But he said it would be a surprise. It is indeed a surprise, a joyful surprise. Yet I must not forget. There is danger, which you love. Tell me of—the King. Does all go well?

VALENTINE

All goes well. We wait only to see which way inclines the army. Meantime there are many like myself going from house to house to sound the heart of the country. If I read the signs aright, a few more weeks or days—and then——

NELL (*runs in hurriedly*)

My lady, my lady! Colonel Tomlinson is marching across the Park towards the house with a posse of men armed with pikes and firelocks.

LADY B.

With a posse of men? Then, Colonel Valentine,

he is coming to seek for you. Who betrayed you? Did you pass through the village? Did any one speak to you?

VALENTINE

One spoke to me—a sour, crop-eared knave, who looked like an ill-bred fiend. He was so kind as to tell me his highly distinguished name—Win-the-Fight Sludge.

LADY B.

'Twas the Sexton. He must have made some guess and gone straight to Colonel Tomlinson, like the meddlesome wretch he is. Well, quick, Nell! quick, girl, thou art always ready. Should the Colonel fly?

NELL

My lady, it is too late. He cannot get across the open ground of the Park without being seen.

LADY B.

Then the secret room—the Priest's Chamber.

NELL

They found Lord Hexham there. The secret of the Priest's Chamber has been already discovered once, and might be again. But, my lady, Colonel Valentine, there is always a chance of a disguise baffling pursuers.

LADY B.

Not friendship for me—not the love he professes

would stay Colonel Tomlinson's hand a moment. He will arrest you if he finds you—and once arrested—— Oh! (*Clasps her hands.*) They know nor ruth nor reason. Oh! Colonel Valentine—that you should run this cruel peril—for me.

VALENTINE

Since it is for you, Lady Beatrice, could I regret it?

LADY B.

Quick, Nell! What disguise shall the Colonel put on?

NELL

He is the same height as Vaughan, your ladyship's serving man. He might masque as Vaughan.

LADY B.

True, true! It must be done at once—the Colonel's cavalier clothes must be hid in the Priest's Chamber. Hurry, hurry! Colonel Valentine, we will talk when Colonel Tomlinson has gone—if we get the chance. Quick! quick!

[*Exeunt* NELL *and* COLONEL VALENTINE.

LADY B. (*looks out of window*)

Here they come, the Colonel and his posse. How determined he looks! Ah! how good and great a man is there spoiled by his party and his religion. What shall we want the pretended

Vaughan to do? He must bring in some wine. He must pour it out. That is not much. Men like Colonel Tomlinson do not regard a serving man. They never look such an one in the face.

'HERE THEY COME—THE COLONEL AND HIS POSSE

The King escaped as a serving man. Oh! it will be a quarter of an hour only: a formal search of the house; then he will go away again and search the Park and gardens. (*Tramp of feet outside.*)

Here they are. (*Enter* COLONEL TOMLINSON.) You are welcome, Colonel Tomlinson. You would be more welcome without your company of armed men. What mean you, Colonel? Am I to be arrested? Come in and let me know what I have done to be honoured by this visit of an armed posse?

COLONEL T.

Forgive me, Madam. (*He turns round and speaks to men outside.*) Six of you stay without. No one is to leave the house. The rest remain in the hall, waiting orders. Lady Beatrice, believe me, I am troubled thus to intrude upon you. My reason is this. The country is filled with agitators and emissaries of the Young Man——

LADY B.

You mean, of the King!

COLONEL T.

Call him as you will. They are going in disguise from house to house, from village to village. They fill the minds of ignorant people with hopes that cannot be realised; they preach another rising; they want more bloodshed.

LADY B.

They might be better pleased with a bloodless revolution.

COLONEL T.

They prepare the way—a way that will be rough and rugged.

LADY B. (*sings in a low voice*)

'Till the King shall come to his own again.'

COLONEL T.

As for these messengers of rebellion, one of them passed through the village just now, called for a stoup of wine at the inn, told the people to expect the Young Man soon, and then entered the Park and came to this house.

LADY B.

To this house? To this house? Where then is he? In the kitchen?

COLONEL T.

I fear that he is not in the kitchen.

LADY B.

Colonel Tomlinson, you have always expressed a great friendship for me.

COLONEL T.

More than friendship, Madam.

LADY B.

Then—more than friendship—if you please to call it so. Now is the time to prove that friendship.

If the man is here, let him depart in peace. Take your soldiers away and let this person—if he is in the house—go unmolested.

COLONEL T.

Should I be worthy of your friendship, Lady Beatrice, if I were guilty of treachery to my cause?

LADY B.

Treachery to—— But I must needs be silent.

COLONEL T.

Alas! Madam, we must both practise patience and silence. Lady Beatrice, I must, as it is my duty, search the house.

LADY B.

As you please. I will tell my women to throw the rooms open. [*Exit.*

COLONEL T. (*sees glove on table—takes it up—examines it*)

(*Aside*) Ha! where the glove is, the owner is not far off. Then he *has* been here. I believe it is the most active of all: Hugh Valentine! the old friend of her brother the Earl. Yes—this must be his glove. He is here! and I must arrest him, and the end is certain. Then farewell to Lady Beatrice! It must be done. Though he may be my rival, I hate to do it; but it must be done. (*Goes*

to door, calls men.) Four of you to basement and cellars. Look behind every cask. Take lights, and leave no corner unsearched. Four of you—you—you four—take the rooms on the ground floor.

'A GLOVE! A GENTLEMAN'S GLOVE'

The rest upstairs—search in every room—search the roof, the chimneys, the garrets; look in every cupboard and under every bed. (*Stands back to*

let LADY B. *enter. She comes in, followed by* NELL *and* COLONEL VALENTINE *disguised as serving man: his hair pulled over his face; a napkin over his left arm.* NELL *takes her work again.* COLONEL VALENTINE *stands in the corner, ready to obey when ordered.* COLONEL TOMLINSON, *when the men have gone off tramping to their work, turns back to the room.*)

COLONEL T.

I trust, Madam, that this trouble to your household will not occupy many minutes. I confess that I hope the malignant has escaped. He will be arrested sooner or later, and I would prefer that he should be arrested outside your house.

LADY B.

The trouble, as you call it, Colonel Tomlinson, of your presence and that of your friends has gone on for a good many years. A few house searchings, more or less, matter little. We are, however, in hopes that there may be a change as to this. But I forgot. Vaughan, be so good as to bring a flagon of wine. [*Exit* COLONEL VALENTINE.

COLONEL T. (*goes to door; looks out.*)
Well?

VOICES OF MEN

Nothing in the cellars, Sir.

COLONEL T.

You are sure? You searched everywhere?

MEN (*tramping downstairs*)

Nothing in the rooms above, Sir.

COLONEL T.

You searched every room—garret, roof, chimneys?

MEN

Every room, Sir, and the chimneys.

COLONEL T.

There are the stables. Go search the stables and the gardens. (*Returns to room.*) Lady Beatrice, I am happy to report that this man of whom we are in search is not in the house.

Enter WIN-THE-FIGHT SLUDGE, the Sexton. *He carries in his hand the* COLONEL'S *embroidered coat.*

SLUDGE

They did not look in the Priest's Chamber, Colonel—I knew the room. 'Twas there we found Lord Hexham whom we took to London, where he was beheaded. In the Priest's Room I found these things. (*Shows coat.*) 'Tis the scarlet coat of the man who passed through the village; the man to whom I spoke; the man we are looking for.

COLONEL T.

I knew it—he has been here—he must be here still. (*Goes to door.*) Let four men watch the door. Search the house once more from top to bottom. He must be here somewhere.

Enter VALENTINE *bearing tray with wine and two silver cups upon it. Offers to* LADY BEATRICE, *who pours out a little and holds the cup in her hand. He offers to* COLONEL TOMLINSON, *who fills a cup and takes it off the tray. Notices servant's hands.*

COLONEL T.

(*Aside*) Ha! Hands rather white and shapely for a servant. (*Looks at his face.*) And face, humph! not a familiar face. I have never seen this fellow at the Hall before.

LADY B.

Will you pledge me, Colonel?

COLONEL T.

Madam, it is my honour so to do (*still looking at* VALENTINE).

SLUDGE (*whispers* COLONEL TOMLINSON)

Sir, sir, a word—this servant is no servant: he is the gentleman whom you seek.

COLONEL T.

Silence. I understand. You can leave that coat and go. [*Exit* SLUDGE.

COLONEL T. (*shuts the door, points to coat and to glove, addresses* VALENTINE)

Sir, if you will be good enough to take off this disguise of a lackey and to put on this coat and to take up your glove, I believe that I shall be speaking to Colonel Hugh Valentine, lately arrived from the Hague, as one of the followers of the young man, Charles Stuart.

VALENTINE

Sir, you are right. No need to change my coat, it is always that of a loyal subject of the King. My glove? (COLONEL TOMLINSON *hands it to him.*) I thank you, Sir.

COLONEL T.

Sir, you are my prisoner. I am a magistrate of the county, and I arrest you.

VALENTINE

I do perceive the fact.

COLONEL T.

Will you give me your parole, or will you be taken in hand by my men?

VALENTINE

You have my parole, Sir.

COLONEL T.

Your business, I take it, has been to spread

abroad sedition and to stir up to rebellion. This is a grave charge, Sir.

VALENTINE

All this, Sir, I assure you, I have considered and understand. There is no more to say. Shall we relieve Lady Beatrice of our presence?

LADY B.

Hugh! (*She takes his hand. To* COLONEL T.) Who told you that this was Colonel Valentine?

COLONEL T.

That glove which I found on your table made me suspect. I knew that Colonel Valentine was abroad. I knew that he would come here from your brother. I saw that the hands of the serving man were not the hands of a servant, and I concluded that we had here none other than the man whom most we wanted—Colonel Hugh Valentine himself.

LADY B.

Oh! the glove!—the fatal glove!

COLONEL T.

Lady Beatrice, you must say farewell to my prisoner. Sir (*to* COLONEL V.), make your farewells. I will leave you alone with this lady for a few minutes; I have your parole. [*Exit* COLONEL T.

VALENTINE

Lady Beatrice, I thank kind heaven that it has allowed me once to look into your face and to kiss your hand. (*He raises her hand and kisses it.*) I have so often, with your brother, who is almost your lover, talked over your perfections that—may I say it?

LADY B.

Colonel Valentine, say what you will, for oh! my heart is breaking. Oh! my brother! my brother! That you should lose such a friend! And I—Oh! But I will weep when nothing more can be done. Quick! Let me think. They will take you to the Assize town—to London. They will try you. I will fall at the feet of this new man, this son of the Protector.

VALENTINE

Nay, I fear that may not be. It will be a drum-head court-martial most likely. Let me say farewell. Dear Lady Beatrice. (*Kneels on one knee and takes her hand.*) Queen of my heart! whom I have always loved, yet never till now beheld—farewell. (*He rises, still holding her hand.*) Oh! we live a lifetime in such a moment. Farewell, my dear; farewell!

[*Ringing of church bells outside, fanfare of trumpets, shouting.*

LADY B. (*runs to windows*)

What is it? They ring the church bells. There are men running across the Park. They are crying—what?

VOICES (*outside*)

God save the King! God save the King!

LADY B. (*clutching* VALENTINE *by the hand*)

What? Is it—is it—is it—God save the King!

Enter COLONEL T.

COLONEL T.

Whatever the varlets shout, you are still my prisoner, Sir. (*Opens door.*) What ho! Guard!

Enter WIN-THE-FIGHT SLUDGE

SLUDGE

They are all tossing up their caps for the Young Man, Sir. They are all gone mad; they are drunk with the blood of Babylon. They are all gone astray. The Devil has possessed them all—all!

[*Exit tossing up his arms.*

VALENTINE

You see, Colonel, to remain a prisoner I must have a guard. I withdraw my parole. If—on the lawn (*touches hilt of sword*).

VOICES

God save the King! God save the King!

'GOD SAVE THE KING!

COLONEL T.

You are free, Sir.

VALENTINE

In that case (*takes cup of wine, offers it to* LADY B.). In that case, Lady Beatrice, what say you?

LADY B. (*takes the cup; then holds it up and sings*)

'Then look for no peace, for the war shall never cease
Till the King shall come to his own again.'

(*To* COLONEL T.) Friend, we have been friends when to be a friend to any of your party demanded the highest gifts on your side and the greatest faith on mine. Reverse the position, dear Colonel Tomlinson. Be now the friend of the conquering side.

VALENTINE (*takes the cup and holds it up*)

God save the King! God save the King!

COLONEL T.

I may not drink that toast with you. Madam, we have been friends—we shall remain friends—always and always, Lady Beatrice. I drink your health, I pray for your happiness, I kiss your hand. [*Kneels and kisses her hand.*

CURTAIN

THE SPY

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

GEORGES CADOUDAL . . .	Leader in Vendée War.
MICHEL LE ROBINÉ . . .	Serjeant. Foster-brother of MADELEINE.
MÉHÉE DE LA TOUCHE . .	The Spy.
PAUL	The Village Fiddler.
PEASANT SOLDIERS, &c.	
MADAME	Landlady of the Inn.
ANNETTE	Her Servant.
MADELEINE DES LIEUX SAINTS .	Fiancée of CADOUDAL.

TIME.—The War of Vendée.
PLACE.—The Principal Room of the Inn of Lokmariaker.

SCENE I.—*Summer evening. Window at back with long bench or chairs underneath it. Doors* R. *and* L. *The* LANDLADY *seated in a high-backed chair looks on, knitting all the time. Men in rustic garb, with belts and cartridge boxes, each carrying a gun, come in gradually, half a dozen or more. They take off their hats to* MADAME*; they shake hands with each other; they stack their guns in the corner and sit down in twos and threes playing cards, dominoes, &c., at the back.* ANNETTE, *behind bench at* R. *corner, has an earthenware tub in front of her into*

which she is shredding vegetables and cutting bread for next day's soup.

LANDLADY (*on rise of curtain*)

They will all be here presently. Annette, if the Captain and Mam'zelle want to be alone, go into the garden and cut lettuces.

ANNETTE

Yes, Madame.

LANDLADY

The tender lambs! They see so little of each other. Annette!

ANNETTE

Yes, Madame.

LANDLADY

In case the Captain takes his supper here, be ready with a chicken to roast.

ANNETTE

Yes, Madame.

LANDLADY

Ah me! The poor fellows must needs sup off broken heads, or worse, on the campaign.

[*At the window appears the face of* MÉHÉE DE LA TOUCHE. *He wears a sailor's jersey; black hair over his forehead and hanging on his shoulders, and a red flannel cap; a pale face. He peers about, steps round to the door and enters.*

MÉHÉE

Good evening, Madame.

LANDLADY

Good evening, friend. I don't know you. Where do you come from?

MÉHÉE

From Sarziau—on the other side of Morbihan. My name is Jacques Candenac.

LANDLADY

Well, Jacques Candenac, what is your business Have you been in the King's navy?

MÉHÉE

No—in fact—— Hush! [*Points to* ANNETTE.

LANDLADY

You needn't mind Annette. In this part of the world we are all true. You ought to know that if you are a good Breton.

MÉHÉE

Well—the fact is, we've got as fast a boat as runs across the Channel, and we load her with brandy. Now you know.

LANDLADY

Well, there's no harm in that. And what are you doing here?

MÉHÉE

I want to join Captain Georges. He is in the village, is he not?

LANDLADY

Perhaps he is; perhaps he is not.

MÉHÉE

I cross the Channel to-morrow. I can take letters for him.

LANDLADY

Well—sit down. (*Aside*) Humph! I don't like your looks, Jacques Candenac. (MÉHÉE *goes to the door, looks up and down the road curiously, takes out pocket-book, makes notes.*) Annette, come here, child. You know Sarziau. Is there anyone there named Jacques Candenac, contrabandist?

ANNETTE

No, Madame. No one.

LANDLADY

Then hold your tongue. [MÉHÉE *returns.*

MÉHÉE

A cup of cider, Madame, if you please.

LANDLADY

Annette, cider.

Enter 1ST SOLDIER.

1ST SOLDIER.

Good evening, Madame.

[*Puts his musket in corner behind door.*

LANDLADY

Good evening. Annette, cider.

Enter 2ND SOLDIER.

2ND SOLDIER.

Good evening, Madame.

[*Puts his musket behind door.*

LANDLADY

Good evening. Annette, cider.

Enter three more Soldiers, *who say* "*Good evening, Madame.*"

LANDLADY

Good evening, friends. Annette, cider.

[*The men drink about and sing.*

MEN

The Blues are on their way,
They think of yesterday;
They think of what to plunder and to borrow;

They do not count the cost
Of all that must be lost
When the reckoning shall come upon the morrow!

Enter MICHEL LE ROBINÉ.

MICHEL

Steady, boys; steady. Not too much cider. (*Shakes hands with the* LANDLADY.) The Captain will be here directly.

MEN (*all together*)

The Captain! Captain Georges!

MICHEL

Well spoken, men! There's no captain like Captain Georges; not one in the world.

MEN

Not one! Not one!

MICHEL

Who is it makes the Blues to break and fly? The Captain! Who leads us on to victory after victory? The Captain!

MEN

The Captain! The Captain!

Enter MADELEINE.

MICHEL

Mam'zelle, you are welcome! The place is rough, but the hearts are true.

MADELEINE

Brave soldiers, I come to wish you God speed.

MICHEL

We are all of us your servants, Mam'zelle, and none more than Michel le Robiné, your foster-brother. [*She holds out her hand. He kisses it.*

LANDLADY

Annette, cider.

[ANNETTE *offers pannikin to* MADELEINE, *who raises it.*

MADELEINE

Friends and brothers all! (*Drinks.*) To the King!

MEN

To the King!

MADELEINE

To the Captain! [*Drinks.*

MEN

To the Captain! [*Drink.*

Enter PAUL, *the village fiddler.*

LANDLADY

Welcome, Paul. You come just in time to give us some music.

[PAUL *sits down and begins to play.* MADELEINE *holds up hand to command silence, steps into the midst and sings a song.*

MADELEINE (*taking stage*)

Gentlemen of the Army of Vendée, attention!

[*Sings.*

So long as we draw breath
We will fight the Blues to death,
Their Master is the Master of to-day;
But a morrow sure will come,
And with that morrow's drum
We shall know how they value Vendée.
Vendée for ever! We break away and sever
From the tyrant who is leading us to fall.
We hold to the right, and may Heaven give us might,
And our Captain, our Captain over all!

[*Business of presenting arms.*

Captain Georges is a man,
Captain Georges can act and plan,
The Corsican is triumphing to-day;

But he counts without his host,
Captain Georges is at his post,
Captain Georges, Captain Georges for Vendée!
Vendée for ever! Yield shall we never!
Though the tyrant may have millions at his call;
We hold to the right, and may Heaven grant us might,
And our Captain, our Captain over all!

LANDLADY

Annette, cider.

[PAUL *goes on playing. One or two of the men get up and execute a clumsy dance.*

MADELEINE (*to* MICHEL, *down stage*)

There is trouble in your eye, my friend. I saw it when I came in.

MICHEL

The Captain has discovered treachery. There are villains abroad and anear.

MADELEINE

Here? Among our brave Bretons?

MICHEL

Traitors creep in everywhere. The Captain's plans have been betrayed. We shall move on at

once—this evening. The rendezvous has been suddenly changed.

MADELEINE

Do they suspect anyone?

MICHEL

I do not know for certain whom the Captain suspects. But, Mam'zelle—people speak but ill of your cousin—of Méhée de la Touche——

MADELEINE

Alas! that I have to own that cousin. Wherever he goes treachery and murder follow in his track. What of him? (*With a tone of anxious terror.*)

MICHEL

The Captain has been told that Méhée has left Paris on a secret mission hither.

MADELEINE

He would not dare!

MICHEL

He does not want for daring of that kind. He has been an agent of the Émigrés and betrayed them. He has been agent for the French Republic

and betrayed them too. He corresponds with the English Government and sells their secrets to the French.

MADELEINE

Why should he come here ?

MICHEL

To get hold of the Captain's intentions ; to inveigle the Chouans to their destruction ; to learn where the army of the émigrés will land. There is no want of business, Mam'zelle, for your cousin to do.

MADELEINE

Well—he will be discovered—and then——

MICHEL

Short work. His back to a wall. A platoon in front of him.

MEN (*all jump to their feet*)

The Captain ! The Captain !

Enter GEORGES CADOUDAL, *about five-and-twenty, military bearing and dress, carrying cutlass and pistols. Looks round, salutes the men.*

CADOUDAL

Good. There are more outside. The village has done well.

MICHEL

Not another man left in it, Captain.

CADOUDAL

All men of Lokmariaker !

LANDLADY

I know them all, Captain. Good men and true —except that white-faced man in the corner. I don't know him.

MICHEL

Ah ! Come out then, you white-face.

[*Steps over and lays hands on his shoulder and brings him before* CAPTAIN.

CADOUDAL

So, sir, who are you ?

LANDLADY

He says that he is named Jacques Candenac from Sarziau. There is no one of that name known at Sarziau.

CADOUDAL

Indeed !

LANDLADY

Says he is a smuggler. They are all smugglers in Sarziau, but there is no Jacques Candenac among them.

CADOUDAL

Show him to the men, Michel. See if they know him.

[*They all look at him and shake their heads.*

CADOUDAL (*in front with* MADELEINE)

My dear, all promises well. There will be a descent in a week or two by the English fleet with five thousand émigrés. This time we shall give a final account of the Blues. Hoche will find the Chouans too much for him.

MADELEINE

Five thousand émigrés! Oh! It is splendid.

CADOUDAL

But, sweetheart, there is treachery abroad. At every point I learn that troops are gathered in numbers that show design, not accident. If I could only lay my hands on the traitors!

MADELEINE

Courage, Georges. A traitor is always found sooner or later.

CADOUDAL

Meantime, the mischief may be done.

[*Outside: bugle and roil of a drum. Men all jump up, take muskets and go out. Voice of command heard.*

MICHEL (*bringing* MÉHÉE *to the* CAPTAIN *by the shoulder*)

No one knows him, Captain.

CADOUDAL (*to* MÉHÉE)

Speak—you——

MÉHÉE

For your own ear, Captain.

[*They come down the stage to the front.* LANDLADY *goes on with her knitting.* ANNETTE *goes on with her shredding.* MADELEINE *and* MICHEL *up stage.*

CADOUDAL

For my own ear? Well—speak.

MÉHÉE

What I said about Sarziau was not true. I am on secret service from the British Government. I bear credentials signed by Pitt. I am here to take over the Channel to-night any message or letter you may wish to send.

CADOUDAL

Indeed! Credentials from Pitt? Do you know, Sir, it is a vastly dangerous thing to carry about credentials from Pitt in this country?

MÉHÉE

It is also a vastly dangerous thing to lead half-armed rebels against the Republic. Since it is for the Cause—why, we do not think of the danger.

CADOUDAL

Well—let me see your credentials.

MÉHÉE

They are here. (*Produces leathern pocket-book —takes out letter.*) Read what is written, Captain.

CADOUDAL (*reads*)

'To those whom it may concern.—The bearer, André Bernard, is a safe and trustworthy person. Letters and information trusted to him are taken over the Channel as opportunity may serve.—PITT.' Ah! Signed, Pitt! Signed, Pitt! This is very strange.

MÉHÉE

Signed, Pitt. What more do you want?

CADOUDAL

Madeleine—Michel—help me to judge this case. (*They step down the stage.*) This man shows me a letter of recommendation signed by none other than Pitt. Pitt himself! For a common sailor named André Bernard, otherwise called Jacques Candenac. Wonderful——

MADELEINE (*looking into his face*)

I seem to remember him. I have seen that face before.

CADOUDAL

When I was in London I saw the Great Man's secretary. I asked him about secret agents. He told me that I must find them for myself; that since the double-dyed treachery of one Méhée de la Touche——

MADELEINE

My cousin!

CADOUDAL

Ah! Since that he would trust no Frenchman again. There, also, I saw certain documents which were known to me; they were signed by Pitt. Well, the signature that I saw is not this signature. This letter is a forgery.

MICHEL (*bugle, drum, and word of command without*)

In that case—the men are ready, Captain, as you hear.

MÉHÉE

The paper is as I received it. I came here, Captain, to say that I cross the Channel to-night, and to ask for letters. Why distrust me?

CADOUDAL

For a very simple reason. You are proved a

liar. Take him out, Michel. Let him be shot at once. You can search him afterwards.

[MICHEL *seizes him roughly by the coat-collar. Cap and wig fall off, disclose a light-haired man.*

MADELEINE (*shrieks and clasps her hands*)

My cousin! Méhée de la Touche! Oh! Villain!

MICHEL

The murderer of September! The companion of Danton. The friend of that butcher Tallien! Ah!

MÉHÉE (*looks round helplessly*)

Madeleine——

MICHEL (*drags him to the door*)

Come, traitor and murderer.

MADELEINE

Georges! he must die, of course. . . . And yet . . . yet . . . yet he is my cousin, and in Brittany cousinship counts for much.

CADOUDAL (*to* MICHEL)

Stay! Let him go. Send him across the Morbihan to Sarziau. (*To* MÉHÉE.) You—villain! you—traitor! For the sake of Madeleine, your

cousin, that noble soul whom I have dared to love, I spare you. Live to fill up the cup of your iniquities. Go! I give you life.

MÉHÉE (*walks to door and turns*)

A gift which I will never forget. (*Aside*) Nor forgive.

[MADELEINE *sinks on her knees and clasps the hand of* GEORGES.

CURTAIN

SCENE II.—*The same. Six months later.* LANDLADY *in her chair knitting as before.* ANNETTE *with a white apron shredding vegetables in an earthenware dish.*

LANDLADY

Annette, go pick the sorrel for the soup. (*Exit* ANNETTE.) A dull time. All the men out fighting; and, alack! many of them killed; the village emptied. When will it end? They are lions, our brave fellows. But—(*sighs*)—when and how will it end? From this corner we are fighting all France. Well, well. The Captain is everywhere; he sees to everything, he directs everything; he wins all the victories.

Enter ANNETTE, *her apron full of sorrel.*

ANNETTE

Madame! There is news. There has been a battle. Oh! close by—not more than five miles away. I heard the cannon firing.

LANDLADY

How do you know? Who told you?

ANNETTE

Little Jean Kerdac. He was among the soldiers. When the fighting began he lay down behind a big stone—a menhir—and looked on. He says it was beautiful to see the Chouans drive back the Blues. When they were driven out of the wood he came home.

LANDLADY

Two or more such victories and we shall have the English with us.

ANNETTE

Would it might be so!

[*Goes on with preparations for soup.*

Enter MADELEINE *joyous, excited; she has a small gun in her hand.*

MADELEINE

Have you heard the news, Madame? We have defeated them and put them to flight.

LANDLADY

How do you know, Mam'zelle?

MADELEINE

I was there. I have just returned from the field of battle.

LANDLADY

You, Mam'zelle? Returned from the field of battle?

MADELEINE

Why not? Where our brave Bretons are, there would I be too! I take good care of myself. Like a coward woman I hide behind the stones. But I watch the battle. Oh! They are scattered; they are flying. My Georges is splendid. The bullets strike men down to right and left of him; but Georges they never touch. He is the Captain and the Conqueror. Why, he will sweep France through from end to end.

Enter MICHEL LE ROBINÉ. *He is wounded, and totters. He has a torn jacket; his hand is tied up with a handkerchief.*

LANDLADY (*springs to her feet*)

M'sieu Michel!

MADELEINE (*runs to his assistance*)

Michel! (*She helps him to a chair or bench and opens his collar.*) Quick, Annette, water! Quick! And cognac! Annette, and a pillow. Quick! (*She bends over him. He opens his eyes. His head falls back upon the pillow.*)

LANDLADY

He has fainted.

MADELEINE (*puts her hand on his heart*)

The heart beats still. Annette, the cognac. (*Pours a little between his lips. He opens his eyes.* MADELEINE *lifts his hand.*) Michel, brother, look up—you are better?

MICHEL

No, Madeleine, I am worse. I had something to say.

MADELEINE

What is it, Michel? Do not mind it now. Think of yourself.

MICHEL

I had something to say. What was it? I forget it. It was important. I have lost it. Madeleine, I am dying. Bring the Curé. I must confess.

MADELEINE

The Curé is with the army. Oh! What shall we do?

ANNETTE

There is a Dominican Friar—a Black Friar—who has been about the village for two or three days. I will bring him. [*Exit* ANNETTE.

Enter CADOUDAL.

MADELEINE

Georges!

CADOUDAL

Where is Michel? I heard—— (*Bending over him with back to audience, slight pantomime of examination. Turning round to others.*) It is but too true. It is internal bleeding. Nothing can save him.

MADELEINE

Georges, what has happened?

CADOUDAL

The enemy are in full flight. They are dis-

posed of for a week. What do I say? For ever! Michel, my dear comrade, is this your fate?

MICHEL

Everyone in his turn, Captain. Who could ask for a better way?

CADOUDAL (*kneels beside him*)

True comrade! loyal friend! faithful soldier! There is no better way. Else, in the name of Heaven! how could one see these things daily and yet go on? Is there aught I can do for you?

MICHEL (*faintly*)

Nothing—except to send for the priest.

Enter ANNETTE *with* MÉHÉE *disguised as a Dominican, with black hood over his head—leans over* MICHEL. MADELEINE *kneels and supports* MICHEL'S *head. One hears the murmur of the confession.* '*Mea culpa: mea culpa: mea maxima culpa.*' *These words grow fainter. Pretended* DOMINICAN *murmurs in ear of dying man.* CADOUDAL, ANNETTE, *and* LANDLADY *stand with folded hands and bowed heads. The confession is finished. The* FRIAR *crosses the forehead of the dying man.* MADELEINE *lays*

his head upon a pillow. Then all gather round him. The DOMINICAN *is in the doorway looking out.*

MADELEINE

He is not dead, Georges! His heart was beating but a moment ago, and his voice was strong to ask for the priest. He may yet recover.

CADOUDAL

No—not with that look in his face. I have seen that look too often. Madeleine, it means but one thing.

MICHEL (*lifts his head*)

Lift me up, Madeleine. So—— Let me look once more through the door. There is the sea of Morbihan; there are the islands where we sailed and played. The sunshine is on them always—I think—Ah! I shall carry with me—wherever I go—the memory of Morbihan—there can be no better place. Farewell, my Captain, my Captain. Stay!—(*starts*)—there was one thing I had to tell you. Captain! There is some new treachery. The Blues are upon you!

CADOUDAL

Where? How?

MICHEL

Here. In the village. They are on you—

even now. Captain! I have done my duty. Long live the King!

[*Falls back and dies. The* DOMINICAN *steps outside and blows a whistle.*

MADELEINE

He is dead. Fly, Georges! Fly! He told you the Blues were on you.

CADOUDAL

The Blues! Why, I have scattered them to the winds. There must indeed be treachery afoot!

Enter company of Soldiers, *followed by the* DOMINICAN *and an* Officer.

DOMINICAN

There is your prisoner. The other one is dead. (*Throws back his hood, shows himself as* MÉHÉE DE LA TOUCHE.) I promised you, *Captain*, that I would never forget!

MADELEINE

Méhée de la Touche!

OFFICER

Surrender, Citizen Georges.

CADOUDAL (*giving up his sword*)

I have no choice. I surrender.

MADELEINE (*while their attention is occupied thus draws a pistol from her belt*)

They shall take me with you, Georges! And for you, good cousin, you shall not go without the wage you so well merit!

[*Shoots* MÉHÉE, *who falls dead on the spot. Amid the general start* MADELEINE *puts her hand in* CADOUDAL'S.

CURTAIN

NOTE.—*If the lady who plays* MADELEINE *objects to firearms she can draw a dirk, conceal it, get closer to* MÉHÉE *while* GEORGES *surrenders, and stab* MÉHÉE.

THE WIFE'S CONFESSION

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LORD AVENEL, in shooting dress, aged twenty-seven.
LADY AVENEL, newly married, aged twenty.
CHARLIE VERNON, Second Lieutenant, First Royal Gloucesters, aged twenty-one.
MARTIN, the Butler.

SCENE—*Breakfast room in* LORD AVENEL'S *country house. Butler discovered. He arranges chairs, smooths the table-cloth, puts newspaper at the back of* LORD AVENEL'S *chair. Takes bundle of letters from a tray on the sideboard and lays them before three chairs.*

BUTLER

Here's the lot, and a pretty lot it is. Glad I'm not his lordship's secretary. Answering all these letters every day would kill me in a week. Give me my pantry and the silver, and I ask no better lot. For his lordship—one, two—(*counts*)—twenty-four letters, *with* a parcel. (*Takes up small parcel*

tied with red tape and sealed, looks at it, feels it, weighs it, presses it.) Marked 'Immediate.' Looks like as if it had paper inside of it. More reading—more writing. That pore young man, the secretary. Some folks are greatly to be pitied. Now my lady's letters. One, two—here's a scented one—something sweet from another lady—great ladies love each other a vast deal more than my friends in the servants' hall. Here's a tradesman's bill, I take it. Her ladyship isn't in a hurry to pay her bills ; but give her time, give her time. What's the use of being a countess if you can't get time ? One, two—(*counts*)—eleven letters, mostly invitations. Pleasure is a weary business. Give me my pantry and my silver. Hullo! Here's a rummy start! The last letter for my lady is just exactly in the same handwriting as the packet for my lord ! Odd, ain't it ? (*Compares them.*) Great square hand—same s's ; same t's ; same—well, it doesn't matter to me. Here's the captain's letters—one—that's a woman's handwriting. Well to be sure, the captain do have a way with him. Another letter—and another—and—dash my buttons ! If this isn't the rummiest go ! Why—this letter is written in the same handwriting as the other two. It must be a hospital letter—or a church restoring—or a permanent incapable—well—well. (*Lays down letters before* LIEUTENANT'S *chair.*)

Enter CHARLIE VERNON.

VERNON

Her ladyship down yet ?

BUTLER

Not yet, Sir. Your letters, Sir. (*Puts them on tray and hands them.* LIEUT. VERNON *snatches the letter whose handwriting has astonished the butler, puts the rest in his pocket, and tears this one open and reads hurriedly.*)

VERNON

The devil !

BUTLER (*mechanically*)

Yes, Sir !

[*He then, with impassive face, goes on smoothing table-cloth, setting knives and forks in proper places, pokes fire.* VERNON *walks up and down the room with vexation.* BUTLER *walks round the table critically. Exit.*

VERNON (*reads the letter again*)

'Since you have given me no answer to my first letter and none to my second, I shall prove to you that I can bite as well as bark. I have sent all the love letters that you have written to Lady

Avenel to his lordship. You will have an opportunity of explaining things to him—I understand that you are his guest. This will make the business all the pleasanter for you.' It is indeed a pleasant affair. Why the devil didn't Isabel destroy the confounded letters when we broke it off? This person is a woman, clearly; an uneducated woman —where is Isabel? Why doesn't she come down in good time for breakfast? Oh! confound the thing! What am I to say? There's no date, I know there's no date on any of the letters. He will think they were written yesterday!

Enter LADY AVENEL.

LADY A.

Good morning, Charlie. Have you got any letters this morning—anything from Clarice?

VERNON

I haven't looked—yet. I've had something else to think about.

LADY A.

What is the matter, my dear boy? You look worried.

VERNON

I am more than worried. Look here, Isabel—you remember two years ago when I thought that you were in love with me——

LADY A. (*coldly*)

Well? This is hardly the place for such reminiscences, is it?

VERNON

No!—Yes!—I—know—but—— There were letters—that I wrote to you—a lot of letters——

LADY A.

What about them? I daresay there were—I remember, now, that there were.

VERNON

Where are they? Did you burn them?

LADY A.

Burn them? Burn them? I forget. No—I believe they are where they were then—in my old desk—in my boudoir.

VERNON

Suppose you look.

LADY A. (*opens davenport or desk on stage* R. *with key*)

They are gone!

VERNON

They are stolen. Do you know this handwriting?

LADY A.

It is a common, illiterate hand; but I think it

is the writing of a lady's maid whom I had to send away.

VERNON

Read the letter.

LADY A. (*reads it*)

Charlie! Good heavens! What does the wretched woman mean?

VERNON

None of my letters have dates. She believes, and she hopes, that Avenel will suppose that they were written yesterday. (*Looks casually at Isabel's cover where her letters are lying.*) See! Here is a letter for you in the same writing. (*Hands it.*)

LADY A. (*reads*)

'Madam, I have sent your lover's letters to your husband for him to read. I hope you will all three be pleased.'

VERNON

Where is your husband?

LADY A.

I suppose he will be down soon. What are we to do?

VERNON

There isn't much left to do, is there? I must

explain the whole truth—secret engagement; found it to be a mistake—if he will only believe it. How long is it since the last letter was written?

LADY A.

Two years. A year before I was married.

VERNON

They were rather strongly worded letters, Isabel—I remember that I thought myself madly in love with you. It was because I had known you from childhood, I suppose.

LADY A.

I suppose so. Otherwise it would have been impossible, of course.

VERNON

Isabel! As if I could mean that. But it *was* a mistake, wasn't it? And I've been in love several times since then.

LADY A.

And I've been in love once—and only once—in my life—and it wasn't with you, my dear boy.

VERNON

And now we've got to pay the piper. Avenel is a fiery man, Isabel—and perhaps he's a jealous man. It's all very well to explain, but it's a thing that may rankle.

LADY A.

I have been wrong, Charlie. It is all my fault. I ought to have explained long ago. But—I—I was ashamed. I could not bear to think that even a mistake had been made. I ought to have destroyed the letters and told him everything. Then if he chose—he might have—sent me away. Oh! I was so foolish—so foolish—— (*Sinks into chair.*)

VERNON

It was a thousand pities, Isabel, that you did not burn those letters.

LADY A.

I forgot them. They were lying in my desk. I was so happy that I forgot them. I never looked at them. What do they matter to me—now?

VERNON

Nothing—nothing—as you say. Yet—a thousand pities——

LADY A.

And then that detestable woman found them and—and—I wonder if my husband has got those letters yet.

VERNON

There are his letters of the day—(*turns them over*)—and, Isabel, there is her handwriting. (*Takes up packet.*) See!—the packet. There are the letters!

LADY A.

Let me see. (*Takes the packet.*) Yes—it is her handwriting. There is no doubt. This packet contains the letters.

[*She holds the packet in her hand. They look at each other in silence.*

VERNON

What is in your thoughts, Isabel?

LADY A.

Tell me.

VERNON

If this packet were dropped in the fire—if it were taken quietly away—in my pocket——

LADY A

Hush! Charlie. Hush!

VERNON (*takes the packet out of her hands*)

These letters are mine, really, because I wrote them. Let me have them back, Isabel; then no harm can possibly come to you. It is for your own sake, Isabel.

LADY A.

No—no.

VERNON

They are stolen letters They were stolen from

your desk by that accursed woman, your maid. Put them back in your desk—and in the fire afterwards. (*Offers her the packet.*)

LADY A.

No—no. That was my temptation—those were my most unworthy thoughts. Charlie—my old friend—my old playfellow—my brother—would you help me to deceive my husband again ?

VERNON

You have never yet deceived him.

LADY A.

I have not told him of things that he ought to have known. And now he is to find out—to be told by a woman who will give the thing all the colouring that belongs to her depraved imagination. I have deceived him. But I will not deceive him any more.

VERNON

Take the packet, then. Put it among his letters. Then farewell to your happiness, Isabel. Think ! A revengeful woman seeks to injure you in that point which you will feel the most keenly—the point of honour. All you have to do is to put that packet in the fire.

LADY A.

I will not do it. Whatever happens, I will not deceive my husband again.

Enter MARTIN.

BUTLER

My lord have sent for his letters, my lady. By your leave, my lady. (*Sweeps them on to a tray—looks about.*) I beg your ladyship's pardon, there was a sealed packet. I noticed it among the letters. I don't see it here.

LADY A.

It is this packet that you are looking for.

BUTLER

Thank you, my lady. (*Stoops and picks it up.*) (*Aside*) It's the packet as has the same writing as her letters and his. [*Exit* MARTIN.

VERNON

Well. The die is cast. He has now got the letters.

LADY A.

Yes. He has got the letters. He will learn for the first time that his wife has received love letters from another man.

VERNON

A pleasing discovery. What shall you do, Isabel?

LADY A.

I shall tell him everything—confess all that there is to confess.

VERNON

Come—there isn't much, really. Boy and girl business, at the worst. We thought we were in love and we wrote burning letters—pity they were quite so burning—pity women can't burn things (*pettishly*). Heavens! What a heap of mischief would be saved if women would burn things.

LADY A.

Since I was so foolish as not to burn these letters, I have a pleasant quarter of an hour before me. Now, Charlie, it's no good getting savage. Leave me for a few minutes with my husband. Go away. You have got a telegram to send, or a letter to post, or something. You have gone to the stables. Go now. Come back in a quarter of an hour.

VERNON

And then?

LADY A.

You will be guided by circumstances. Above

all things, remember that you have nothing to conceal and nothing to be ashamed of.

VERNON

And you, Isabel—have you nothing to be afraid of? But you know Avenel, and so I leave you.

[*Exit* VERNON.

LADY A.

Nothing to be afraid of? Yes—everything. He will learn that the girl he thought innocent of so much as a flirtation had received love letters—written love letters—with another man—had gone through all the business before he appeared upon the scene at all. Nothing to be afraid of? Everything—everything. If I lose his respect, what will remain of his love? Love dies without respect. To lose his love—to become that miserable thing, a wife unloved—it is a hard price to pay for a girl's mistake. And I might have destroyed the packet! No—no—never! It was a cowardly thought—a base and unworthy thought. Ah! Here he comes.

Enter LORD AVENEL.

LORD A.

Well, my darling, what about breakfast? (*Kisses her kindly. Throws his letters, including the packet, carelessly on the table.*) Where is Vernon?

LADY A.

He was here five minutes ago. Gone to the stables, I believe—to see about his horse after yesterday's fall. You shall have breakfast at once. (*Rings bell.*) We needn't wait for Charlie.

Enter MARTIN *with dishes, places them on table. They sit down.* MARTIN *takes off covers.*

LADY A.

You need not stay, Martin. I will wait on his lordship. [*Exit* MARTIN.

LORD A.

You mean, my dear, that I am to wait upon you. But why send away the faithful Martin?

LADY A.

He can come back presently, perhaps. I have something to say to you, first, Avenel—in his absence.

LORD A.

Is it something very terrible? You look, my dear, as grave as Rhadamanthus.

LADY A.

It is a confession. Every confession is terrible.

LORD A.

Then, my dear, don't make it. (*Gets up and*

leans over her.) What is the matter, Isabel? You look quite pale and anxious.

LADY A.

It is the confession——

LORD A.

Then, I say, don't make it. I don't want your confessions, dear child.

LADY A.

No, but you must hear me. Sit down and listen.

LORD A.

Well—you have your own way always. Is Vernon to hear the confession as well?

LADY A.

You shall answer that question for yourself. Oh! Avenel—how shall I begin?

LORD A.

Better begin somewhere near the end—so as to get it over. That's the best way, always, with confessions. Come, Isabel, my dear, one would think you had committed some kind of crime.

LADY A.

I believe it is a crime. But you shall hear. It's the confession of a situation.

LORD A.

A situation? Well—let us have the situation. In a play, they tell me, the situation is everything.

LADY A.

There was once a boy, there was once a girl——

LORD A.

Not uncommon. The world is very much made that way.

LADY A.

Oh! Avenel, believe me—it is very, very serious.

LORD A.

Go on, dear—with the boy and girl.

LADY A.

They were very much together when they were children. When the boy went to school they wrote to each other——

LORD A.

Dear me! This is very rare and wonderful.

LADY A.

They continued to write to each other——

LORD A.

Did they, really?

LADY A.

Please do not mock. It is very, very serious. How can I go on? Well, they wrote to each other after the girl had come out, when they ought not, you know. It was a secret engagement —because they thought they were in love with each other.

LORD A.

Lots of young people write to each other because they fancy they are in love. It is a common hallucination. It is not generally known, but half the private houses in this country are private lunatic asylums in consequence.

LADY A.

Avenel—I am so miserable, and you will not be serious.

LORD A.

Let me have some breakfast, my dearest wife, and then I will listen. Sorry Charlie is not here while the kedgeree is hot. Will you have some?—or an egg? Nothing? A little buttered toast —there, now—silence for a brief space. (*Eats breakfast.*)

(LADY A. *lays her head in her hand and sighs.*)

LORD A. (*looks up*)

Dear child—(*finds and takes her hand and kisses it*)—you don't look well enough to go on with the story. Suppose I finish it for you. Yes, I am sure I can finish that story. They wrote to each other, this pair of semi-attached lovers, for some time. Their letters became ardent, as becomes young lovers. As for the young gentleman, Romeo himself was not a more extravagant lover. Of course I have never seen his letters, but I can quite understand them—because, you see, my dear, this girl was the most lovely girl in the world, and the sweetest and the best—quite the best—my dear—(*kisses her hand again*)—quite the best, I say. (*Rises and kisses her forehead.*)

LADY A.

Guy—what do you mean ?

LORD A.

I am finishing the story for you.

LADY A.

But—but—that is my story, except that the girl was nothing of the kind. She was capable, though she didn't know it, of the vilest deception.

LORD A.

Don't interrupt, if you please, Lady Avenel. Let me see.—Oh! yes—they went on writing to each other until somehow—some day—I really don't know how, they came to the conclusion that they had only been playing at love and they didn't mean it in the least.

LADY A.

It was his exaggeration. He protested too much—so that the girl began to ask herself—and she found out——

LORD A.

Yes—she found out? Come, I've given you a good lift—now you can go on.

LADY A.

She found out that I—I mean she did not love the young man at all. And I—I mean she—told him she had made a great mistake and I begged his forgiveness——

LORD A.

Well?

LADY A.

And he wrote back to say that he too had made a mistake, and we—I mean—they were to remain good friends always and nothing more.—So that was all over.

LORD A.

Happily. All over—else what would have happened to the other man?

LADY A.

What do you mean?

LORD A.

Well: there was another man, wasn't there?

LADY A.

Ye—yes—there was another man.

LORD A.

You see—I am always right.

LADY A.

She was ashamed of this stupid love passage—and she told him nothing about it.

LORD A.

After all, a boy and girl business. What did it matter?

LADY A.

She ought to have told him. Not to tell him was cowardice. He thought the girl was fresh and innocent and had never heard any words of love.

LORD A.

You think he had that opinion?

LADY A.

I am sure of it.

LORD A.

I find I must finish the story, my child, after all. It is your turn to listen. This girl did not tell her real lover that she had made a mistake. But as it was off with the old love before it was on with the new, and as there never had been more than a boy and girl fancy, there was no reason why she should tell him anything unless she chose. Her new lover neither expected nor desired any such confession. He knew that he had the affections of the girl; he trusted her altogether; and if he had known this thing it would not have made him trust her the less——

LADY A.

But she ought to have told him.

LORD A.

I do not think so. But that's a doubtful point. We will argue it another time. Well—they were married—these two—and they lived happy ever afterwards.

LADY A.

No—they cannot.

LORD A.

Ever afterwards, I tell you. Meantime, the girl had left some of the letters in her desk; forgotten them, I suppose. These were found by a maid whom she dismissed, and stolen.

LADY A. (*springs to her feet*)

Avenel—you know everything, then!

LORD A.

This woman took the letters and, I suppose—one knows her kind—she tried to get money on them from the man who had written them. She failed; she then threatened to play her last card. She wrote to the girl's husband and offered to sell him the letters. When she got no answer she waited awhile; then tried once more to extort money from the writer of the letters, and when that failed, she sent them to the girl's husband. Is that your story, Isabel?

LADY A.

Yes—yes—yes! But—how did you know about Charlie?

LORD A.

My dear, do you suppose that when people in our position get engaged there are not always other people ready to scrape up anything against either of us? I was told of your boy-and-girl business

before our engagement had been made known four and twenty hours. Yet you both thought it was a secret. My child, everybody knew.

LADY A.

Oh! and I was always afraid to tell you.

LORD A.

My dear, I have known it all along, and as for these letters (*takes up packet*)—Yes—this is the handwriting of the creature. Could you believe, my dear, that I would stoop to read them? Could you really think that your husband had so little respect for you that he would condescend to open such a packet?

LADY A.

You are too noble! Say only that you forgive me.

LORD A.

No. For that would mean that my wife had done something blameworthy. Forgive you, Isabel? (*Takes both her hands and kisses her.*) Never. I can never forgive you—believe me. (LADY AVENEL *sinks into a chair and covers her face with her hands.*)

Enter VERNON—*looks around—hesitates.*

LORD A.

Ah! Charlie! My wife and I were just talking

about you, and wondering what you would advise in a particular matter. But the fact is, I have made up my mind——

VERNON

As to what?

LORD A.

Why, as to a certain packet of letters which some one has tried to misuse. We need not talk about them. Here they are, and (*throwing them into fire*) there they are. And now for breakfast.

LADY A. (*aside*)

Guy—I adore you.

CURTAIN

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